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# Dramas of Camp and Cloister

By

ARCHIE E. BARTLETT



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RICHARD G. BADGER

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# RAHNA'S TRIUMPH

## I.

*Priest.* O Altheus, Rahna's altars blaze with  
light,  
And ripe fruits in their golden splendor heaped,  
Mingle their odors with the finer incense  
Of delicate flowers; these in their witchery sub-  
tile  
Like the exquisite spell of woman's tranquil  
presence,  
Which quickens yet subdues; those more akin  
To manhood's sturdier glory. Feel'st thou not,  
Even thou, the sacred spell?

*Altheus.* I feel indeed  
My heart grow tender.

*Pr.* Not with barbarous rite  
We celebrate our worship. In this feast  
Of thanks for garnered grain, we shed no blood  
Of lowliest creature, but we share our gladness  
With even the voiceless peoples of the sod.

*Al.* I know, I know—and praise you.

*Pr.* Rahna's love  
Embraced all creatures, nor e'er gave consent  
To death or pain. The food of innocence  
Alone he blesses, nor permits his people  
To prey on weaker life.

*Al.* 'Tis noble, noble;  
Deny me not my brotherhood. I, too,  
Love the same mercy.

*Pr.* Yet 'tis Rahna's mercy,  
Whom thou deniest. Altheus, all our race,  
Save thee and these, thy desolate followers,  
This handful of dissenters, blend their prayers—

## 2 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

Sped on the beams of heaven-uplifted lids,  
With the kindred worship of this odorous light  
From Rahna's altars:

*Al.* Most ungrudgingly  
I view the honors paid to gentle Rahna,  
Were they not marred by narrow human credos  
That circumscribe progression.

*Pr.* What is narrow  
In the noble creed of Rahn?

*Al.* Whate'er is finite,  
Though noble as the galaxy, is narrow.

*Pr.* Altheus, sublime blasphemer, thou thyself  
Art nobler than the galaxy; yet thou  
Art also finite; and condemning thus  
The ages' triumph, thou, lone pioneer,  
Wilt now transcend the finite?

*Al.* Not the finite,  
But any given finite, even great Rahna's,  
But give me time, I'll distance.

*Pr.* Ah, how futile  
To wing these misty heights! Come to the temple,—

Come daily. We'll convince with arguments  
More subtle than thy own, perfume and light,  
Music and song and matchless choral dance,  
And the thronging presence of all true believers,  
And hushed recital of his martyrdom,  
And the blessed story of his perfect life  
In a brutal generation.

*Al.* Yet defects  
May be discerned in even the holy life  
Of martyred Rahna. And though I had failed  
To find these flaws, I still should understand  
Not Rahna perfect, but my own ideals  
Still too inadequate. The wholly perfect,  
Being infinite, is not attainable

In finite time.

*Pr.* O Altheus, what a loss  
To thee and to religion! Wert thou ours  
Thou wert no layman. Such as thou are ever  
Priests or deniers.

*Al.* Yea, I am a priest  
Of these devoted worshippers of truth,  
Few among many, even as royalty  
Is rare upon the earth.

*Pr.* Alas, alas!  
Altheus, thy priesthood in its martyrdom  
Pleadeth with thee for mercy.

*Al.* Nay with thee  
Pleadeth it, brother—for thy recognition  
And fellowship ungrudging.

*Pr.* Why contract  
Thy own development, cut thyself off  
From human brotherhood, and all the fullness  
Of a social life! The muses wait to crown thee,  
If thou but breathe thy thought in language current

Among thy brethren. Why invite thy ruin  
In quarrel over terms? Suppose thy thought  
Be *love* or *purity*, then call it *Rahn*,  
That men may understand thee and receive thee  
As priest and benefactor.

*Al.* I'll not lie,  
Though I pine in endless exile.

*Chorus of Old Men.*

More true the common sense;  
Draw thou thy wisdom thence;  
Wiser the general mind.  
Most noble far, most rich  
The life that hath its pitch  
From the concord of mankind.  
Strongest the pulse that leaps

#### 4 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

From the universal deeps,  
From the heart-throb of the race.  
Deeper the common need;  
Sweeter the ancient creed;  
Pure its immortal grace.

*Chorus of Young Men.*

Alone, brave pioneer, alone  
Seek out the nobler thought.  
Seek the wild, pure air of the forest zone,  
With its health undreamed and its grace un-  
known.

Hold all the conventions for naught.

#### II.

*Father.* O Altheus, son, hast thou no reverence  
For these gray hairs, that thou rejectest thus  
Thy cradle-teachings?

*Mother.* Ah, how nearly spent  
The speeding years! When thou ere long shalt  
stand

Beside our biers wilt thou with sullen spirit  
Behold the solemn rites, bitterly listen  
To every sacred prayer, and still disloyal  
To our dishonored memory, frown as now  
On the sacred book of Rahn?

*Al.* I'll still, as now,  
In reverent sorrow show true loyalty  
By being true, nor ever seek relief,  
In that great loneliness, by violation  
Of my own conscience.

*Mother.* Time hath been when sons,  
Even to their own hoar age have cherished still  
The prayers their mothers taught them.

*Al.* I must answer  
For my own actions. Pray can you relieve me  
Of this stupendous burden? I revere you  
With unfeigned piety; and yet, forgive me,

I pay the deeper awe and reverence  
To my unborn children. 'Tis posterity  
Must nearer limn the immanent deity  
In human likeness. Join with me in worship  
Of our common offspring.

*Father.* Mother, we outstay  
Our welcome in this world. Let's creep apart  
Into the tomb, and hide us there forever  
From this great sorrow.

*Al.* Precious is the truth  
That justifies a sacrifice like this.

*Chorus of Young Men.*

Altheus, our hero, cherish thy free, brave  
thought,

To life's fresh calendar true. When locks are  
gray

We can sit at ingle-sides in querulous peace,  
Bewailing the rashness of adventurous youth,  
That seeker of Cynosure; now let us brave in  
our course

The glacial floods, half ocean and mountain half,  
That threaten us back. Steel-bosomed still let  
us pursue

The pole of the universe ever receding from  
view.

*Chorus of Old Men.*

True to our fathers! Did they not believe  
In priestly sovereignty,  
In miracle and charm? Did they receive,  
Granting thereby a license unto us,  
The impious heresy  
Of Gallileo and Copernicus?

True to our fathers! and they passed from earth

## 6 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

Before the per.ou  
When nature's wonder, and creation's worth  
Had been so superseded on the stage  
By all the myriad  
Malapert novelties of modern rage.

True to our fathers! Did they ever hear.  
In all their histories,  
Of ions darting through the atmosphere,  
And all the other upstarts by the score  
Whose vulgar mysteries  
Cheapen the hallowed sanctities of yore?

True to our fathers! And henceforth away  
With this frivolity  
Of innovation, spawn of but a day:  
And with the knowledge be we satisfied,  
Eke with the polity,  
In which our honored fathers lived and died.

*Chorus of Young Men.*

True to your fathers? In their earthly cells?  
Or in immortality,  
Living and growing? Where each father dwells,  
Finds he not nobler wisdom now to teach,  
Whose high reality  
Erewhile transcended his encumbered reach?

True to your fathers? Think ye that the mind  
With all its dignity  
In swaddling-bands of death can be confined  
Till it could grow no more, nor wiselier think.  
Nor in benignity  
Let hints of inspiration hither sink?

True to your fathers? Pray, at seventeen

Went ye inquiringly  
To seek the light that by your sires was seen  
At your own age? Or did ye rather learn,  
Gladly, aspiringly,  
The fullest truth their manhood could discern?

True to your fathers? Have ye never guessed  
That this audacity  
Of grand, new thoughts astir within the breast  
Is quickened by our fathers, as they yearn  
Through earth-opacity  
To make one ray of heavenly radiance burn?

### III.

*Betrothed.* Altheus, I come to join these sup-  
pliants

That plead with thee, these lips of reverend age  
That should not be thy suitors. Why alone  
Withstand the wise and good, and hold thyself  
Wiser than all? Why, from thy point of time  
Sneer at the garnered wisdom of thy race  
Through centuries long? If he to whom we  
point thee

Had ever cherished harsh or narrow thought  
We might less wonder that thy fierce rebellion  
Is thus persistent. No coarse, threatening curse  
Bring we from Rahna's lips to fright thee back  
Into his fold.

*Priest.* Whether thou wilt or not,  
We have his gracious promise that our loved  
ones,

Though straying for a time, shall yet be drawn  
Into his holy bosom.

*Mother.* Sometime, son,  
Thou'lt be restored; but, oh! we need thee now.

*Father.* We need thee in this life.

*Betrothed.* O love, I need thee



## 8 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

Close at my side whene'er I kneel to Rahn  
For courage in those hours of sacred terror  
When thy dear presence flings its fearful glory  
Around my trembling womanhood. Ah! Altheus,  
Dost thou reject that saint of chastity  
Almost on the marriage-eve? Methought that  
Altheus,  
Rahn's faithful servant, would, no less than  
Rahn,  
Be priest to her he loved.

### *Chorus of Old Men.*

Dwells Rahna with his bride  
A score of stainless years,  
Nor from her side  
Wanders disloyal when her beauty's pride  
Sinking from sight back to her soul's profound  
So disappears.

Rahna, that saintly breast  
But thrice in decades twain  
Unto him pressed;  
And thrice the heavenly spheres he dispossessed  
Of lovely human spirits meshed and bound  
In Hymen's chain.

### *Chorus of Young Men.*

When shall I meet her and greet her, my bride.  
In her beauty's meek pride,  
In whose presence the stress and the strain,  
In whose presence the passion and pain  
Break like waves on the shore  
In music once more  
That lulleth my spirit to rest.

Not today? It is well, it is best—

Let the passion and pain,  
Let the stress and the strain,  
Let the tumult and anguish increase;  
All the deeper the ultimate peace,  
If the storm multiply

**Till the waves mountain-high  
Break sublimely at last on the shore.**

**Betrothed.** Alas! what sorrow waits  
Our vain-attempted union! Must I hide me  
Whene'er I say my prayers? And when our  
children

Are given to us, must I secretly  
Tell them of Rahn? And wilt thou teach them  
counter

**That Rahna was but man?**

*Altheus.* Alas! alas!

*Priest.* O, Altheus, be our prince and be our priest.

**Make peace with God and man.**

*Chorus of Old Men.*

Oh! bend that noble brow  
Unto the sacred chrism.  
Oh! breathe the holy vow;  
Escape thy churlish schism;  
Nor dizzily daring bow  
Henceforth o'er thought's abysm.

*Chorus of Young Men.*

Will Altheus yield?  
Will he be insincere?  
Will he be priest of these?  
Priest will he be of the world?  
My priest no more?

**Father.**

**O son, for thee we pray.**

10 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

*Mother.* Ah! to thyself pray I.

*Betrothed.* Join thou our prayer.

*Chorus of Worshippers.*

O purifier of the heart,  
Here in our midst today,  
Go with us also when we part;  
Be with us on the way.

Let not this hour have been in vain;  
Let not its glory cease;  
Oh! let its halo still remain;  
Let linger still its peace.

These faces that are now so bright,  
Transfigured from thy throne—  
Oh! bless them still, let still their light  
Be symbol of thine own.

Our forms that we have bowed in prayer  
Humbly before thy face,—  
Let them the consecration share,  
Nor lose this moment's grace.

Our voices that are tremulous  
In thy great presence, Lord,  
Oh! keep them ever sacred thus  
In beautiful accord.

Yea, make us beautiful and high  
In thought's refining grace;  
Our human presence dignify;  
Exalt our human face.

*Altheus.* Lord, I believe. Help thou mine unbelief.

*Chorus of Old Men.*

The noble, soon or late,

## RAHNA'S TRIUMPH

11

Seek thus at Rahna's shrine  
Their spirits' home.  
Why further proof await  
That Rahna's word divine  
From God hath come?



# THE LAST JUDGMENT

*I. The Indictment. Patheos, Theos, Chorus of Priests.*

*Pan.* Theos, some urgent suit?

*The.* As urgent, father,  
As the summons of a mortal soul by death,  
Which is, indeed, the occasion that hath brought  
me

To thy supreme tribunal.

*Pan.* Now, what spirit  
Upon the threshold of the life immortal  
Dost thou, O Theos, challenge?

*The.* Atheos,  
That soul unbending.

*Pan.* Much like eulogy  
The accusation soundeth. What offence  
Maketh thee adversary of this soul  
In the dread transition moment?

*The.* Thou dost know  
That to his age and race I am the form  
Wherein men worship thee. This man alone  
Of all his time hath spurned my sovereignty,  
And walked with head unbowed.

*Pan.* O venerable,  
In whom mankind have imaged their conception  
Of attributes divine, thou art, indeed,  
The nearest likeness man hath yet attained  
Of my own nature. Ages yet shall pass  
Ere thou shalt lose thy sovereignty, dethroned  
By a loftier ideal. Man hath made thee  
To be the image of his higher self,  
To uplift his lower. If this Atheos  
Hath cast thee off with all thy dignity

## 14 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

Of hoar tradition round thee, and elected  
A spiritual solitude—

*The.* E'en such, I swear,  
Hath been his violent course.

*Pan.* Then let us seek  
Whether he walketh blind, or still discerneth  
Some vestige of the truth.

*The.* I undertake  
To prove that he hath utterly betrayed  
The sweet faith of his youth.

*Pan.* Then what redress  
Seekest thou at my hands?

*The.* Either that now  
Upon his dying couch relenting come  
And due remorse, or else, for justice' sake,  
Some visitation on him in the life  
That fast approaches—some degenerate state  
To brand his treason—some ignoble form  
Of savage or of brute.

*Pan.* The great ascent  
Of soul is not so baffled. His promotion  
Cannot be thus repressed. Nor am I, Theos,  
Supreme above him to decide his fate  
With arbitrary fiat. He hath part  
In my own will. His nature and my laws  
Are of one essence. He himself determines  
The rate of his advancement. Go, invite him  
Before this bar to be his own accuser,  
Judge of his own desert.

*Chorus of Priests.*

O Theos, the eternal,  
Creator of the spheres,  
Theos, supreme, supernal,  
Yield mercy to my fears.

Thou lookest, and I quiver;

Thou frownest, and I die:  
Thou smitest me—forever  
In anguish do I lie.

Awhile thy will may linger,—  
Then nature's laws prevail;  
Thou liftest but thy finger,—  
Nature and science fail.

*II. The Summons. Theos, Altheos, Chorus of Mourners.*

*The.* I summon thee before the eternal bar  
To give thy last account. Beseech in haste  
Some priestly intercession, if perchance  
There still be hope of mercy.

*Ath.* Pantheos  
Himself doth hold his court within my soul,  
And I partake his life. Through my own con-  
science

Shall he announce his judgment. I decline  
The intercessor's office.

*The.* Think how weak  
Thy little life amid the fearful dangers  
Of this last hour.

*Ath.* My little life is mighty  
With the universal being that doth thrill  
Through all my spiritual veins.

*The.* How it repents me  
That I must needs accuse thee in thy death  
Amid these piteous gaspings!

*Ath.* Fitter time  
Had ne'er been found. My soul beginneth now  
To feel its freedom. While my body struggles  
In this unconscious travail, and the mourners  
Throng round it in suspense, my soul is strong  
To meet the future.



## 16 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

*The.* Come, thou haughty spirit,  
And listen to thy doom.

*Ath.* Nay, here I wait  
To meet my accusation. Pantheos here  
Will utter judgment. At my death-bed now  
The inquisition fitly may proceed  
Uninterrupted, and my mourning friends  
Be none the wiser.

*Chorus of Mourners.*

Oh! must this soul so royal,  
So earnest and so grave,  
So stainless and so loyal,  
So hopeful and so brave,  
Pass from the day  
Without a ray  
Of light divine to guide his perilous way?

*III. The Trial. Theos, Atheos, Chorus of Priests.*

*Ath.* I am ready  
To answer my accuser.

*The.* This defendant  
Hath made himself an outlaw by rejecting  
The source divine of law. The worshippers  
Gather devoutly all around the world  
To pay their reverence—in that faithful number  
Atheos ne'er was found.

*Ath.* 'Tis man, not God  
Needeth my service.

*The.* To that gracious power  
Wherefrom thy being springeth, owest thou not  
Eternal thanks?

*Ath.* May I not fitly pay  
Eternal thanks in silence? Hath the divine  
An ear of flesh to hoard in vanity  
Our audible prayers? Hath it a fleshly eye

THE END

To gloat on our genuflections?

*The.* Yet how meet  
God be well pleased when man is not ashamed  
To confess before his fellows!

*Ath.* Who hath shame  
Because of loyalty to human ties  
That he feeleth to be noble? He that blusheth  
To own his faith hath not a faith, but doubteth  
The creed that he recites; let him seek further  
And supplement his doctrine. I shame not  
At the worship of my soul.

*The.* Then why repress  
So coward-like its tongue?

*Ath.* Even so I check  
All public ostentation of my love  
For wife and child—too personal and sacred  
For proclamation.

*The.* Yet you make your home  
With wife and child, confessing thus to men  
The depth of your devotion. Why not cherish  
Some little nook within the house of God  
In modest witness of your filial faith?

*Ath.* Because within that house 'tis thou thy-  
self

That men adore, and not the perfect god-head  
That thou dost caricature. 'Twere impious  
To render thee my service, knowing at heart  
That thou art not the noblest.

*The.* Hear his words,  
O Pantheos! Behold what anarchy  
He kindleth now throughout the universe  
With these his lawless thoughts.

*Chorus of Priests.*

Slowly that spirit glideth  
Into the presence dread.  
The avenger patient bideth

## 18 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

Crouched at the dying head.  
Vain now the vaunt of morals;  
Useless the pride of thought;  
Fruitless are now the quarrels  
O'er the *is*, the *can*, the *ought*.

Art falters; virtue faileth;  
Wisdom is in the dust;  
Nothing henceforth availeth  
But simple, childlike trust.

### *IV. The Verdict. Pantheos, Atheos, Chorus of Philosophers.*

*Pan.* Alone, my Atheos,  
We stand together; through thy lips I speak,—  
Pronounce the verdict.

*Ath.* Ever through my lips  
I pray thee speak. I would that I were nobler;  
I thank thee I am noble as I am.  
I thank thee for this glorious ideal  
That beckons through my life. No longer now  
I worship coldly with my intellect,  
But feel my soul a-thrill with tenderness  
Toward thy infinite life. I worship, worship  
Till scarcely I can keep the precious secret  
Of this divine communion. Yet I'll strive  
To hold my dignity, maintaining sacred  
The privacy of this most tender union  
Of thee and me. More fully enter now  
My vital being. Let some nobler form  
Attest my mastery in another stage  
Of cyclic growth. Yea, make me more and more  
An agent in accomplishing thy will.

### *Chorus of Philosophers.*

Another step is taken,  
Another triumph done,

## THE LAST JUDGMENT

19

Another past forsaken,  
Another future won;

The creeds invalidated,  
Virtue again supreme;  
Man's sonship vindicated,  
His godhead not a dream.



# FIVE ACTS OF LOVE

## *Prologue.*

Thus may the minstrel, wandering lone and poor,  
With the last silence shadowing his face,  
Pause for a moment at the radiant door  
Where leaneth some rare form of dreamy grace,  
Touch his sad harp with yearning in his eyes,—  
Teach, while she listens in her bright surprise,  
How she should love some happier man than he,  
Nobly and sacredly.

## *I. Betrothal.*

*Friedrich.*

Brunhilda's God and mine!  
In this sweet hour of triumph and of joy,  
From her face unto thine,  
O Love divine,  
I turn me and the first glad breath employ  
In thanking thee.

*Brunhilda.*

O love, with thee I bow,  
Quietly, kneeling thus beside thee here,  
Love's consecration vow  
Confirming now  
By witnessing through praise to God how dear  
This gift to me.

*Chorus of Spirits.*

Holy, holy, holy! Father strong and tender!  
Thou art manifested below in human love;  
Gladly, gladly turn we from thine unseen  
splendor  
To this radiant likeness of thy grace above.

## 22 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

*Fr.*

I turn me from the sight  
Of this new, costly glory in her face,  
This tender deluge bright  
Of swift love-light,  
This beauty-throe that thrills a moment space  
At eyes' first kiss.

*Br.*

Even though forever glide,  
Without the fervent homage of his gaze,  
This moment's acme-tide  
Of beauty's pride,  
The costly mutual sacrifice I praise,  
Meekly submit.

*Cho.*

Holy, holy, holy! to the Father's altar  
Bring these sacred lovers their priceless offering.  
Holy, holy, holy! angel voices falter  
With the awe and rapture round them as they  
sing.

*Fr.*

O God, our love we bring,  
Richer than all the world's infinity;  
And unto thee our king  
The offering.  
Purely we dedicate and solemnly  
In sacred pride.

*Br.*

O God, thy gift of love,  
The witness of our kinship unto thee,  
Like to a fiery dove  
Sent from above,

Lowly we now accept, henceforth to be  
In thee affied.

*Cho.*

Holy, holy, holy! hear the Eternal  
Dropping benedictions from out the heavenly  
light.

Oh! ye are the children of the love supernal,  
Children well-beloved, pleasing in his sight!

*Fr.*

While yet our curfew-hour  
Of temperate custom shall its warning spare,  
Unto the holier power  
For love's rich dower  
Hold we a moment's holiday of prayer  
With bended brow.

*Br.*

No other fitting rite  
To solemnize the covenant of souls  
Save in our Father's sight,  
While love's own light  
All round about like heavenly music rolls,  
To breathe our vow.

*Cho.*

Holy, holy, holy! love of man and woman!  
Sweetest incense offered before the central Sun!  
Holy, holy, holy! love divine and human  
Solemnly approaching mingle into one.

## *II. Bridal.*

*Fr.*

Each guest, O love, departs;  
A hush of awe suffuseth all the air;



## 24 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

The stars, like trembling hearts,  
Beat with quick starts;  
A rapturous terror quivereth everywhere  
To suit the time.

*Br.*

The hour, the hour is here,  
And all the heart's glad courage melts away;  
The soul is faint with fear,  
Scarce keeping cheer;  
How can we bear the dread that holdeth sway  
This night sublime?

*Cho.*

Holy, holy, holy! Father strong and tender!  
Thou art manifested below in human love;  
Gladly, gladly turn we from thy unseen splendor  
To this radiant likeness of thy grace above.

*Fr.*

Love, at this sacred shrine  
'Tis meet we seek the courage to endure  
From love's own source divine.  
Thy God and mine  
Vouchsafe his strength and keep us ever pure.  
As even tonight!

*Br.*

Oh! God's near presence shed  
Its dignity and beauty in a shower!  
And o'er each bended head  
The sainted dead  
Lean tenderly to bless the hallowed hour,  
With faces bright!

*Cho.*

Holy, holy, holy! to the Father's altar  
Bring these sacred lovers their priceless offering.  
Holy, holy, holy! angel voices falter  
With the awe and rapture round them as they  
sing.

*Fr.*

O God, this moment seize  
In its ideal mystery and grace;  
And ere like odorous breeze  
It swiftly flees,  
Limn thou a world of moments from its face  
For years to come.

*Br.*

O God of light and truth,  
Let love ne'er lose its luster in our sight;  
Let not a thought uncouth  
Or word's unruth  
E'er wrong the sacred memory of this night,  
Striking it dumb.

*Cho.*

Holy, holy, holy! hear the Eternal  
Dropping benedictions from out the heavenly  
light.  
Oh! ye are the children of the love supernal.  
Children well-beloved, pleasing in his sight!

*Fr.*

O Father, testify,  
By some rich gladness in my darling's breast,  
With love how pure and high  
Thus draw I nigh  
To share the baptism of the awe unguessed  
Around us here.

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## 26 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

*Br.*

O God, be witness thou,  
Through some new sense of dignity and pride,  
To him with whom I bow  
How eager now,  
With perfect self-surrender doth his bride  
Trust and revere.

*Cho.*

Holy, holy, holy! love of man and woman!  
Sweetest incense offered before the central Sun!  
Holy, holy, holy! love divine and human  
Solemnly approaching mingle into one!

### *III. Parentage.*

*Fr.*

Oh, thought of awe and pride!  
And hath the Angel of the Lord in truth,  
God's herald glorified,  
Stood at thy side  
On loftiest embassy that heavenly ruth  
Sendeth to earth?

*Br.*

Oh! join with me in prayer!  
I feel too little worthy and too weak;  
And he that bade me wear  
Halo so fair  
Alone can give the dignity I seek  
Of lowly worth.

*Cho.*

Holy, holy, holy! Father strong and tender!  
Thou art manifested below in human love;  
Gladly, gladly turn we from thy unseen splendor  
To this radiant likeness of thy grace above.

*Fr.*

Brunhilda's God and mine,  
Grantest thou us this wondrous living dream,  
This miracle divine  
Alone of thine  
That from the first hath never ceased to seem  
Miraculous?

*Br.*

Were I in yonder cloud,  
And on my brow a starry crown were placed,  
While solemnly I vowed  
With head low-bowed,  
I were not so exalted or so graced  
As even thus.

*Cho.*

Holy, holy, holy! to the Father's altar  
Bring these sacred lovers their priceless offering.  
Holy, holy, holy: angel voices falter  
With the awe and rapture round them as they  
sing.

*Fr.*

O Father, honor her;  
For she is purer than the ethereal air  
That storms can never stir,  
And sacreder  
Than reverend temples incense-filled from  
prayer  
Breathed by the good.

*Br.*

O Father, thank him thou  
That crowns me with his purifying thought  
To exalt my woman's brow,

## 28 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

And richly now  
Invests me with this gift that he hath brought  
Of motherhood.

*Cho.*

Holy, holy, holy! hear the Eternal  
Dropping benedictions from out the heavenly  
light.

Oh! ye are the children of the love supernal,  
Children, well-beloved, pleasing in his sight!

*Fr.*

O God, be thou her guide!  
Preserve her till the trial-time is o'er,  
The pain so dignified  
And full of pride  
And rich in consecration and in store  
Of comfort high.

*Br.*

Lord, thine forever be  
The new life forming now amid my own,  
The life that thou and he  
Have given to me,  
A treasure richer than the glowing zone  
That spans the sky.

*Cho.*

Holy, holy, holy! love of man and woman!  
Sweetest incense offered before the central Sun!  
Holy, holy, holy! love divine and human  
Solemnly approaching mingle into one.

### *IV. The Separation.*

*Fr.*

Where hath my saint now fled

## 29

*Br.*

**Cho.**

Fr.

*Br.*

Into the gloom beneath  
I vainly cry, though once my tones, methought,  
Could ne'er an accent breathe  
And fail to wreath  
That other voice in unison unsought,  
An eager thrall.

### 30 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

*Cho.*

Holy, holy, holy! to the Father's altar  
Bring these sacred lovers their priceless offering.  
Holy, holy, holy! angel voices falter  
With the awe and rapture round them as they  
sing.

*Fr.*

Oh! can she love no more?  
And am I left with desolated heart,  
Where joy and life before  
Love's likeness wore,  
And knew no being from their love apart,  
There clinging fast?

*Br.*

And will his love grow cold,  
Thinking the life he loved hath been destroyed?  
And shall I no more hold  
My throne of old,  
But wandering all forsaken through the void  
Undream the past?

*Cho.*

Holy, holy, holy! Hear the Eternal  
Dropping benedictions from out the heavenly  
light!  
Oh! ye are the children of the love supernal,  
Children well-beloved, pleasing in his sight!

*Fr.*

I will be pure and true;  
And though I never see again her face  
In all I think and do  
Will I renew  
Devotion to that memory of grace  
And nobleness.

*Br.*

Glow on, my heart, the same,  
Cherishing him in loyal widowhood,  
True as when first he came  
And gave his name  
To be a crown of beauty and of good  
That still doth bless.

*Cho.*

Holy, holy, holy! love of man and woman!  
Sweetest incense offered before the central Sun!  
Holy, holy, holy! love divine and human,  
Solemnly approaching, mingle into one.

*V. The Reunion.*

*Fr.*

Father, thou dost restore—  
We thank thee for restoring all that life,—  
The sweet rich life of yore,  
So full before,  
Now fuller for the passion and the strife,  
The pain and death.

*Br.*

Father, through thee we greet,  
Breathing our mutual welcome in our prayer;  
For souls can never meet  
Save thou complete  
Thyself that union and thyself do share  
Each tender breath.

*Cho.*

Holy, holy, holy! Father strong and tender!  
Thou art manifested below in human love.  
Gladly, gladly turn we from thy unseen splendor  
To this radiant likeness of thy grace above.

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## 32 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

*Fr.*

Brunhilda's God and mine,  
I thank thee for her wondrous added dower  
Of loveliness divine,—  
The radiant sign  
Of all the marvelous, triumphant power  
Of holiness.

*Br.*

O Lord, 'tis not of me;  
This priceless beauty, all unearned, unsought,  
Came sacred down from thee,  
And it shall be  
Thine angel to ennoble life and thought  
And heal and bless.

*Cho.*

Holy, holy, holy! to the Father's altar  
Bring these sacred lovers their priceless offering,  
Holy, holy, holy! angel voices falter  
With the awe and rapture round them as they  
sing.

*Fr.*

Yet, even thus radiant bright,  
She cannot be more sacred or more dear  
Than when in thy pure sight  
Our troth to plight,  
We knelt together in the holy fear  
Of love's first awe.

*Br.*

My lover's new, rich praise  
Can not obscure the precious memory  
Of his dear, reverent gaze  
In other days,

When life was no less pure and sully-free  
For sorrow's law.

*Cho.*

Holy, holy, holy! hear the Eternal  
Dropping benedictions from out the heavenly  
light.

Oh! ye are the children of the love supernal,  
Children well-beloved, pleasing in his sight!

*Fr.*

We praise thy holy name;  
We thank thee for delight, for agony.  
For passion's sacred flame,  
Man's mortal frame,  
Investing with its martyr-dignity  
Of depths untold.

*Br.*

We thank thee, thank thee, Lord,  
For beauty and for purity of heart,  
For love's divine accord,  
And love's reward  
Of ever-deepening newer deeps that start  
Out of the old.

*Cho.*

Holy, holy, holy! love of man and woman!  
Sweetest incense offered before the central Sun!  
Holy, holy, holy! love divine and human  
Solemnly approaching mingle into one!

*Epilogue.*

My love! my love! 'tis her wedding-night;  
And the cottage is ready to burst with light;

### 34 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

It is ready to break from the contact of earth  
And float in its nimbus of beauty and mirth.

My love! my love! she is hidden from sight;  
Her features are lost in their own joy's light,—  
A lucent center whence richly streams  
The sweetness of even her secretest dreams.

A glorious figure beside her stands.  
A swell of music, a clasp of hands,  
And he, too, is lost in the aureole  
Around them both forever to roll.

No more will I pace the street in vain;  
But I leave him now to his priceless gain,  
Leave her to the rapture and tenderness  
Of the victor's love in its first excess.

All night will I kneel in my chamber dim,  
Praying for her and praying for him;  
And if ever a sob my utterance break  
'Twill be but of gladness for her dear sake.

My love! my love! 'Tis her wedding-night,  
And the cottage is ready to burst with light;  
It is ready to break from the contact of earth,  
And float in its nimbus of beauty and mirth.

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# LOVE'S ENCHANTMENT.

*Dramatis personae.*—*Roderick and Bertha; fairies, including Feodore and Feodora; courtiers, officers and messenger.*

## ACT FIRST.

*Scene I. Rural scene. Roderick and Bertha in rustic attire.*

*Roderick.* O, Bertha, since my last heroic song  
I laid aside, that mighty Cham of old  
And all his deeds and wealth, how weary now  
And empty-hearted do I wander forth  
Amid our sylvan scenes! My gentle Muse,  
Give me some theme, suggest some new device,  
Some enginery of plot, that all this wealth  
Of thought-rife feeling may not aimless plunge  
With idle foaming in a cataract  
Of unavailing passion, to subside  
In over-limpid peace, and pass away  
In vagrant pensiveness. Let it as well  
To thought and art contribute. Let henceforth  
Each crystal undulation all transformed  
Flash forth electric splendor. Give some charm,  
Some spoken word whose magic sound hath  
power  
To quicken vague ideas of the mind  
Into full-sinewed thoughts.

*Bertha.* And why appeal  
To me for theme, while birds are singing round  
And leaves are fluttering and the blissful brooks  
Suffuse the air with rich antiphonies  
Of vernal satisfaction?

### 36 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

*Rod.* Not for me  
These rural life-outbreathings fill the soul  
Till it overbrim in song. Though deep and rich  
They lie within my heart and give the bulk  
And quality of life, still is there need  
Of ferment from without, some element  
Of new experience, which is not a part  
Of my own fibre. Let the courtier come,  
And the world-worn monarch, and in pastoral  
song

Find stimulus to thought; but I must turn  
To courts and camps and deep-thronged thoroughfares,  
Where storm and stress and struggle tempt and try  
And strengthen manly virtue.

*Ber.* Ah! my poet,  
You should have been a king. How you would teach  
By your example what a king should be  
In valor and in manhood!

*Rod.* Ha! yourself  
Would make the queenliest queen that ever trailed  
The gilded purple.

*Ber.* Would that fairies still  
In our prosaic time had life, and power  
To work their mild enchantments. Then how soon

The diadems would clasp our brows about  
And courtiers kneel around us!

*Rod.* Even to-day  
The fairy spirit lives on in the world  
In love and song and beauty; and this hour  
So deep a rapture thrills my leaping pulse

That all the air seems teeming with the magic  
Of merry elfin life.

*Ber.* Hath it the power  
To bring the court and camp into our vale  
And furnish you with matter?

*Rod.* Yea, methinks  
Almost it hath.

*Ber.* Lo! then a theme's at hand  
To tax your powers. Suppose, sir, that we two  
Were royal monarchs.

*Rod.* Sharing one blest throne?

*Ber.* Nay, nay; but rulers of two rival realms  
In sanguinary conflict.

*Rod.* True! methinks  
A man's and maiden's friendship is a sort  
Of gentle warfare. You, my lovely foe,  
Do daily vanquish me.

*Ber.* 'Tis a long feud  
Between your sex and mine.

*Rod.* Since Eve and Adam  
Encountered first in Eden and their eyes  
Flashed out fierce daring and the sweet defiance  
Of love's excess, the while at every turn  
By tacit understanding failed they not  
To argue counter, in exuberance  
Of tenderness, because caresses failed  
To give their feelings vent.

*Ber.* An explanation  
Of family brawls. What comfort would it be  
To a wife that's beaten!

*Rod.* Hush! *euphemei.*

*Ber.* Ah!

You're breathing mystic words. You feel per-  
chance

The approaching fairy-spell that draweth nigh  
To aid poetic fancy, and uprear

### 38 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

Your lordly palace and your capital  
Here in our lowly dell. Methinks myself  
The air unnatural and weirdly wild  
Suddenly grows. I fear a storm is near.  
Shall we not go?

*Rod.* Why, no! the wind's not right  
To bring a storm. And yet the breezes quicken  
And tonic freshness in the atmosphere  
Intoxicates the sense. Let us remain;  
Each moment now is worth a score of years  
To youth and poesy.

SCENE II. *A ring of Fairies gather about.  
dancing and singing.*

*Fairies.—*

Ha! ha! a goodly pair!  
Manly youth and maiden fair!  
Well, well, our plan is weighed!  
Well, well our trap is laid!  
They shall not escape the snare  
Till a match is made!

*Ber.* Oh! haste we, haste we quick away!  
How horrid 't is to hear and see!

*Rod.* Ah no! ah no! we'll stay, we'll stay!  
'Tis wine and rapture unto me!

*Ber.* They'll do us harm;  
I dread some charm.

*Rod.* Nonsense, my dear! why do you fear?  
Are you not safe while I am near?

*Ber.* 'Tis true I have no cause for fear  
So long a time as you are here.

*Fairies.—*

Behold, O youth, the flush  
Of that priceless maiden-blush  
Making an El Dorado of her cheek.  
What! boy, have you not eyes?

Do you not see the prize?

Why care you any further now to seek?

*Ber.* Oh! haste we, haste we quick away!  
How horrid 'tis to hear and see!

*Rod.* Ah, no! ah, no! we'll stay, we'll stay!  
'Tis wine and rapture unto me!

*Ber.* They'll do us harm!  
I dread some charm.

*Rod.* Nonsense, my dear! why do you fear?  
Are you not safe while I am near?

*Ber.* 'Tis true I have no cause for fear  
So long a time as you are here.

*Feodore and Feodora, bearing each a goblet,  
draw near, the former to Roderick, the latter to  
Bertha.*

*Fairies.* Drink, oh! drink the wondrous draught!  
Never yet hath mortal quaffed  
Beverage rife with joys of life  
So rich and sweet and love-complete.  
Drink! no more thou'lt know a pain,  
Drink, no more thou'lt seek in vain  
The unuttered good that thou wouldst  
gain,  
When from thy heart in silence start  
The yearnings thou wouldst fain  
In secrecy maintain.

*Voice.* Beware! beware!

*Ber.* What sound in the air?

*Rod.* 'Tis the murmur of trees  
Astir in the breeze.

*Feodore.* Drink!

*Feodora.* Drink!

*Ber.* Oh! do not commit thy soul  
To the perilous control  
Of the supernatural powers



40 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

Regnant o'er this flesh of ours.

*Rod.* Fear thou not these dwarfish clowns  
With their simpers and their frowns,  
Each our temporary thrall;  
Coming docile at our call.

*Voice.* Beware! beware!

*Fairies.* Ha, ha! ha, ha! Drink, drink!

*Ber.* What if we be headlong hurled  
From the order of the world,  
In abysses fathomless,  
Into blackest hopelessness?

*Rod.* Drink! drink! I'll not care  
So we be together there.

*Feodore.* Drink!

*Feodora.* Drink!

*Ber.* Into conflict and confusion;  
All temptation, all defeat;  
All enchantment and illusion;  
Every error and deceit.

*Rod.* Whate'er enchantment craze our eyes,  
Howe'er our senses trip,  
Though only phantom-forms arise  
For our companionship,—

Still magic never can convert  
Ourselves to aught unreal;  
No sorcery can disconcert  
Our spirits' own ideal.

Virtue and duty, still supreme  
In that fantastic world,  
Will be unshaken by the dream  
Through which the sense is hurled.

*Feodore.* Ah!

*Feodora.* Ah!

*Fairies.* Ah—h—h!

*Ber.* What menacing tones?

*Rod.* 'Tis a chattering squirrel.

*Ber.* Let us flee from the peril!

*Rod.* From dwarfslings and crones?

*Feodore.* Ha!

*Feodora.* Ha!

*Fairies.* Ha—a—a!

*Feodore.* Subdue him, subdue him!  
And break his haughty will!

*Feodora.* Pursue him, pursue him!  
Do everything but kill!

*Fairy-king.* [*To Feodore and Feodora.*] O imps  
of our band,  
Malevolent twain,  
Take these lovers in hand!

*Feodore.* } And ply them with pain?

*Feodora.* }

*Fairy-king.* Yet release and restore  
When their penance is o'er;

*Fairies.* And let the termination  
Be joy and jubilation.

*Feodore.* Ha?

*Feodora.* Ha?

*Fairies.* So!

*Feodore.* } Ah—h—h!

*Feodora.* }

*Ber.* The charms, they begin,—  
The invasion from hell;  
See the shadows that spin,  
We are lost in the spell.

*Rod.* We'll meet the ghosts that flit about  
As nobly as we can,  
Sincere and earnest and devout,—  
True woman and true man.

## 42 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

And if things seem all strange and weird,  
Uncanny wind and weather,—  
Why need the loneliness be feared?  
We still shall be together.

*Ber.* Why,—to confess I do not mind,—  
Your faults are all so venial,  
That your society I find  
Not often uncongenial.

*Fairies.*—

Oh! the coyness of the youth!  
Not to see that he hath won!  
Oh! for merriment and ruth  
Bid him urge the advantage won;  
Tell him all that he doth miss  
Till he claim the expectant kiss.

*Ber.* Oh! haste we, haste we quick away!  
How horrid 'tis to hear and see!

*Rod.* Ah no! ah no! we'll stay, we'll stay!  
'Tis wine and rapture unto me!

*Ber.* They'll do us harm;  
I dread some charm.

*Rod.* Nonsense, my dear! why do you fear?  
Are you not safe while I am near?

*Ber.* 'Tis true I have no cause for fear  
So long a time as you are here.

*Fairies.* Drink!

*Voice.* Beware! beware!

*Rod.*

*Ber.* } We'll drink! we'll drink!

*They drink.*

### ACT SECOND.

*Scene I. Before a royal palace. Roderick as king, surrounded by courtiers, including Feodore,*

*Bertha as queen, surrounded by courtiers, including Feodora.*

*Rod.* Ha! I will flinch not from the utmost  
glory

Of regal state. Have I not ever said  
To be the kingliest king one hath but need  
To live the manliest man? If God now will,  
I'll prove my policy.

*Courtiers.*

My Lord!

*Feodore.*

Observe—

*Feodore converses apart with Roderick; Feodora with Bertha.*

*Ber.* Sir, I approve the lofty sentiment  
Of your late utterance. Were we peasant-bred  
Not born unto the purple, we might still  
With such a guiding principle of life  
Step to a throne with perfect dignity  
And win a people's reverence.

*Rod.*

Noble queen,

Your approbation, grateful in my ears,  
Doth bind me to yourself in sympathy  
And mutual respect. Motives so high  
As you and I profess might well, it seems,  
Serve to facilitate a fair adjustment  
Of the grave question whereon our two thrones  
Have been so long at variance, and to-day  
With reference to which you come to us,  
An honored, royal guest.

*Ber.*

I feel assured

That both of us, so far as may consist  
With duty to our people, will observe  
A generous policy; and if, perchance,  
We cannot come to terms, fair courtesy  
And kingly chivalry will still redeem  
Our disagreement and convert the rupture  
Into a harmony, till variance

## 44 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

Hath its own noble music.

*Rod.* Joyously  
My heart responds to kindred sentiments  
Uttered by royal lips. Let us withdraw  
With our advisers to the room prepared  
To hold our consultation.

SCENE II. *Evening. Bertha and Feodora.*

*Ber.* Whene'er he speaks he uttereth some  
thought

Dear to my soul. Ah! he is not a stranger;  
I knew him one time in some other life,  
And now resume acquaintance,

*Feodora.* Ah! who knows  
But in some other state you lived the wife  
Of this superb young king?

*Ber.* How odd a thought!  
And how absurd!

*Fe.* You blush as helplessly  
As any peasant girl. My gentle queen,  
Upon my knees I beg you to forgive me,  
But you do love the king.

*Ber.* And if I do,  
I see no cause why I should disavow it,  
Or blush, except for pride.

*Fe.* O lady dear,  
In humble suppliance I beg of you  
A royal boon,—not for myself I beg,  
And not for you, but for that matchless king,  
Who loves you, loves you, lady.

*Ber.* How, I pray,  
Know you all this?

*Fe.* Ask me not how I know.  
I only know. Speak but the word, fair queen,  
And swift as thought I'll bring him to your side,  
Confirmer of my truth.

*Ber.* Shall sovereigns  
Turn to law-breakers?

*Fe.* Why! you make the laws.  
The laws are but your instruments, to use  
Or to neglect. 'Tis but a courtesy,  
A queenly courtesy that you should welcome  
Most royally this noble hero-king.

*Ber.* And this were right queen-worthy?

*Fe.* Even your throne  
Were not more queenly. I avouch, fair lady,  
'Tis royal etiquette.

*Ber.* Ah! then, methinks  
I'll fall back on my simple womanhood  
And break the royal custom. Ha! he said  
The kingliest king is but the manliest man.  
That rule applies; and he and I are one  
In that high sentiment. My mother's breast—

[*Feodora croaks.*

What was that noise?

*Fe.* 'Tis naught. I have a cold.

*Ber.* That breast whereon I sobbed my childish  
vows

Of truth and purity shall teach to me  
The real queenliness. The love of God—

[*Feodora croaks. Bertha starts.*

*Fe.* 'Tis naught; be not alarmed.

*Ber.* The love of God  
Shall teach my human love its quality;  
And I'll be queen of self.

*Fe.* Seest thou yon valley green?  
Seest thou the sylvan scene?  
Look on the fairy ring.  
Quaff ye both while we sing.  
Dost thou not realize,  
Dost thou not recognize  
This is enchanted ground?

## 46 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

When the morn cometh round,  
Nowhere shall then be found  
All the sublime array,  
Passed all away.

Just for this wondrous while  
Let the deceit beguile:  
'Tis but a blissful dream;  
Things are not what they seem.  
When thou dost wake again  
Back to the life of men  
Thou shalt not bear a trace  
Marring thy maiden-grace;  
Nothing shall e'er recall  
What doth this eve befall,  
Thou shall salute the light  
Virgin and bright.

*Ber.* Was it the king that said,  
Lifting his noble head—  
Someone that once I knew,  
High-souled and pure and true,  
Be it the king or no—  
Fit from his lips to flow:  
"Though in illusion sad,  
Though in enchantment mad,  
Though in wild magic bound,  
Though the world reel around,  
Though none but phantoms rise,  
Greeting our eyes,—  
"Still would be right and wrong;  
Still would be stanch and strong  
  
Virtue's exalted thought,  
Duty's eternal ought,  
Manhood's regality,  
Soul's high reality,

God's sweet creation-plan,—  
Woman and man."

*Feodora croaks thrice and disappears in the form of a frog.*

*Ber.* Ah, horrid dream!

SCENE III. *Evening. Roderick and Feodore.*

*Rod.* Oh, woman beautiful and good! Oh,  
queen

Regal and wise! To look upon her face  
Makes me a man.

*Fe.* My king, I can but praise  
Your royal judgment. Round the sunlit globe  
Lives not her equal.

*Rod.* Whosoe'er shall clasp  
That glorious bosom to his own shall then  
Be utterly a king. Meantime he's still  
A piteous slave.

*Fe.* My lord, my royal liege,  
I give you joy, I give you rapturous joy.  
She is your guest; and you may be a king,  
Winning that splendid presence.

*Rod.* Desecrate  
That saintly womanhood? and violate  
Love and my chivalry and all the laws  
Of royal hospitality?

*Fe.* Why, sir!  
Do you forget? or being still but young  
Have you not learned? Others have done you  
wrong,  
Leaving you uninformed.

*Rod.* I must confess  
I understand you not.

*Fe.* You do not know  
The royal privilege; nor understand



## 48 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

Your hospitality is incomplete  
Till you have borne it to the utmost bound  
Of kingly kindness?

*Rod.* Do you speak the truth?  
In heaven's name tell me. You will drive me  
mad,  
Mocking me thus.

*Fe.* I speak the simple truth.

*Rod.* And is a king so common; and a queen  
A thing so cheap? And is this lovely woman,  
Even she, perchance,—

*Fe.* She never left before  
Her mother's side. She's all that you have  
thought.

*Rod.* And shall remain so till the day of doom,  
Or I will hang some royal criminal  
To the topmost dome of his corrupted palace,  
Protesting thus against the prostitution  
Of womanhood and manhood.

[*Feodore caws.*]

Whence that sound?

*Fe.* Ah! that? a tame bird in the outer court,  
Kept by a home-sick soldier.

*Rod.* Ah, poor man!  
I'll find him in the morning and attempt  
To comfort him.—What fancies have I harbored,  
Like a poor idiot! Ha! such callow thoughts  
Are folly more than crime. I magnify,  
Like a crude boy, the merest symbolism  
Into the all of love; an incident,  
A simple incident of love's deep life,  
I take for love itself; the ritual,  
The splendid ceremonial pageantry  
Of this religion I would substitute

For heart's true worship. Now I see the rite  
Becomes an evil, if it be not buried,  
Lost like a rain-drop in the boundless ocean  
Of a whole life-time's tranquil sympathies  
And reverent ministry. I promise Heaven,  
As solemnly as e'er I made response  
To any call of conscience, that henceforth  
I'll hold it the high purpose of my life  
To win her presence and to lure her hither  
To be my sweet home-saint, the dear Madonna  
Here at my fireside altar. In the meantime  
I'll never wrong her with the revelry  
Of libertine desire; but I'll suppress  
The very thought of passion, till at last  
In her subduing presence, in the glory  
Of her own spirit-face, the fire of passion  
Is sweetened into dignity and calm,  
To be the beauteous handmaid evermore,  
Lowly and modest, reverent and chaste,  
Of God's dear love, new-manifest in hearts  
Of mortal nativity.

[*Feodore caws.*

The bird again!

Lugubrious sound! yet, since I understand  
The circumstances, full enough for me  
Of tenderest suggestion.  
*Fe.* Ha, ha! the potion over-well  
Hath duped our gentle poet!  
Recall that scene of magic spell,—  
The grove, the brook below it;  
Recall the merry elfin bands,  
The gay, tumultuous singing,  
The dance, the interwoven hands,  
The tinkling laughter ringing.

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Thou'rt bound beneath a potent charm;  
These shows are all unreal;  
They have no substance, nor can harm,—  
All fancied and ideal.

Seize then these joys that only seem,  
Before the charm's expended;  
No evil can survive the dream;  
The occasion soon is ended.

These pageantries will soon be past,  
Mere sorcery and magic:  
Why thou, amid the mockery vast,  
So serious and tragic?

*Rod.* So be it. In myself, indeed,  
No phantom thou discernest;  
But I am real: hence the need  
That I be true and earnest.

*Feodore caws twice and disappears in the form  
of a raven.*

*Rod.* Ah, hateful nightmare!

SCENE IV. *Bertha.*

*Ber.* Alas, alas! I never until now  
Reluctant turned me homeward. Ah! methinks  
I leave my heart's home far behind to-day  
And go to dwell with aliens. Noble king!  
I feel a dark foreboding that no more  
I am to see his face. What if he knew  
The thoughts unwomanly that yesternight  
Found entrance to my mind?

*Feodora enters.*

*Fe.*

O lady, queen,

Return, return thou ; yield the point at issue ;  
Preserve the peace and win the princely hand  
That holds thy destiny.

*Ber.* Out of my sight,  
Thou dangerous seducer ! Ne'er again  
Show me thy face.

*Feodora hisses and disappears in the form of a snake.*

SCENE V. *Roderick.*

*Rod.* Now she is gone ; my kingdom is a desert,  
And we are more than parted ; for henceforth,  
In duty to our people must we twain  
Become each other's foes. The smoke of war  
Will roll between us and forevermore  
Exclude that starry face—ah ! how it shames  
With its sweet dignity the lawless thoughts  
I entertained last night !

*Feodore enters.*

*Fe.* My king and chief,  
Why doom yourself to grief ? You have the  
power

To yield that petty principality  
And win your bride. The people for awhile  
May grumble somewhat ; but a splendid wedding  
Will make them hop with joy, till they forget  
Their brief chagrin.

*Rod.* Avaunt ! ill monster !  
You never yet approached except to tempt  
And to betray me. Hence, and no more come  
Into my presence !

*Feodore howls and disappears in the form of a dog.*

## 52 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

*Rod.* What a glorious day  
If we might join our kingdoms into one  
Eradicating those disputed bounds,  
And ending all the feud! But quite in vain  
The splendid dream. These nations far too long  
Have cherished mutual hate. The love of two,  
Though they be sovereigns, would be impotent  
To join these hostile lands. And yet I swear  
That spite of war and hate I'll love her still,  
And triumph so forever, and defy  
The devil and his angels.

*Voice.* Ha, ha! ha, ha! a phantasm fine  
Was she in all her splendor!  
Forevermore must thou resign  
This fairy vision tender:  
The mist where melts this dream of thine  
Her form no more doth render.

*Rod.* Ha, ha! ha, ha! ye fiends of air,  
I hurl you back defiance:  
You and the starry heavens fair  
And history and science  
May all indeed be phantasms rare  
In impish world-alliance;

Still she of all the firmament  
Abideth real ever,  
By matter's magic bounds unpent  
Fearless of hate's endeavor,—  
Virtue and life too closely blent  
For any power to sever.

And she abides; and I abide  
So surely as I love her:  
In virtue's kinship side by side  
We two shall yet discover

The glories of that starry pride  
That reverent bends above her.

Then roll the battle-smoke between  
To hide that radiant vision;  
Let hate and horror intervene  
And space's vast derision,  
And death congeal with frost-breath keen  
Love's liquid kiss Elysian.

Still I am hers, and she is mine;  
No distance can defeat me;  
Not clearer could the noon-day shine  
Than doth her beauty greet me,  
Nor nearer doth the breeze incline  
Than hourly she doth meet me:

For I am hers, a kindred soul  
By virtue's right supernal,  
And mine must be the self-same goal  
As hers whose radiance vernal  
Reveals as in a heavenly scroll  
Mine own the life eternal.

*Voice.* Ha, ha! ha, ha! the crazy bard,  
He'll quite evaporate  
And in the aether meteor-scarred  
Seek out his misty mate!

*Rod.* The churls! they drive me from thy face  
And think that thus, forsooth,  
They'll keep me from thy beauteous grace,  
And from thy queenly truth.

Ha! can they shut me from the flowers,  
And from the song of birds?

## 54 DRAMAS OF CAMP AND CLOISTER

Through many, many happy hours  
Thou'lt listen to my words.

The flowers are sister-spirits, dear,  
Whose form thou wilt assume,  
The heart-beat of my song to hear,  
And thank me with perfume.

*Voice.* Ha, ha! ha, ha! the clouds above,  
A merry harlequin,  
The poet, if he fall in love,  
Will dance and vault and spin!

*Rod.* We'll spend a happy, happy hour,  
All bright and innocent,  
Like sportive fairies in their bower  
Of petaled merriment.

I'll whisper in the rose's ear,  
The virgin wild-flower bright,  
And make the sweet thing blush to hear,  
And tremble with delight.

In every flower I'll breathe a joy;  
Thou'lt listen, love, in each;  
'Twill never tire thee, ne'er annoy,  
That airy, rhythmic speech.

Thy fairy bosom, thy fair throat,  
Will swell as thou dost hear;  
Thou'lt be so glad, dear, thou wilt float  
In the bright atmosphere.

*Voice.* Ha, ha! ha, ha! the solemn clown  
Unconscious of his plight!  
Hear comet-laughter showering down  
Hilarious delight.

*Rod.* Yet thou shalt never hear offense,  
Thou'lt never be distressed;  
No shadow of irreverence  
Shall stain thy lover's breast.

For I'll be brave, dear, yet not bold,  
Brave in my purity;  
I'll tell, till naught remains untold,  
The love I bear to thee.

I'll tell my love unfaltering;  
I'll tell it o'er and o'er;  
With every bird I'll sing and sing;  
With every bird I'll soar.

*Voice.* Ha, ha! ha, ha! the stars of morn  
Another song will sing;  
To greet this maniac forlorn  
Uproarious shouts will ring.

*Rod.* Yet, eager thus, I'll be subdued,  
Amid a solemn hush;  
And even in thought I'll not intrude,  
And not profane thy blush.

Ha! I should blush or blanch like thee,  
If love should be profaned;  
Not more than thou, where'er I be,  
Need I to be restrained.

A fairy-love do I profess;  
For fairy-like art thou:  
A flower-like love, to cheer and bless,  
A music-love I vow;

A sunbeam-love, a Sabbath-love,





Even though a queen, even though like Joan of  
Arc,  
She mad men's blood in battle and subdue  
The steel of foemen.

*3rd Of.* And besides, my lord,  
We've ordered all our heaviest batteries  
Directed thitherward.

*Rod.* 'Tis well, my men,  
She's worth alone the whole of these two king-  
doms;

Yet we'll not slack our duty.—Merciful heaven!  
That shell hath struck our midst! Oh! sacred  
form

Of God in man, now radiant with health,  
And now thus mangled! Somewhere is there  
guilt,—

Where I know not; kind heaven forgive us all,  
And make us gentler. In my impotence  
I yield this one poor mite of human pity,—  
My ministry of tears.

*Voice.* Ha, ha! ha, ha!  
'Tis all illusion; 'tis enchantment all.

*Rod.* Alas, my brain! I know not. This I know:  
Pity is real; real, suffering love;  
And mercy's no delusion: I will kneel  
Among these quivering forms and let them hear  
Once more before they die the tender tones  
Of human love. O God in heaven, I pray  
Pity thou me! Ah! not for these alone  
Who lie here bleeding, but for me I pray,  
Who suffer with them all the agonies  
Of writhing death.

*Voice.* Ha, ha! ha, ha! ha, ha!

*Rod.* And if, indeed, my reason is departing  
Under the stress, bear witness that its last  
Spasmodic poor exertion was a throe

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Of pity-anguish for the suffering  
Of brother-men. So guard the dignity  
Of the poor, tottering fabric. Grant the ruin  
Its own pathetic grace.

*Voice.*

Ha, ha! ha, ha!

SCENE III.—*The same. Roderick and officers.*

*Messenger enters.*

*Mess.* O hail! our sovereign; glad the news we  
bring!

*Rod.* O God! what news?

*Mess.* The queen and all her staff  
Are prisoners.

*Rod.* And is the queen unharmed?

*Mess.* She's wounded mortally.

*Rod.* 'Tis well! 'tis well!

My people triumph; and myself, myself  
Am but a single man among our millions,  
Only one man.

*Officers.* My lord!

*Rod.* My countrymen,  
I loved her.

*Officers.* Loved her?

*Rod.* Love her, love her, friends.

*Officers.* Alas! alas!

*The queen is borne in, accompanied by her staff.*

*Ber.* My dear and noble king!

*1st Of.* You love him, lady?

*Ber.* Yea: I love and die.

*1st Of.* Methinks 'tis time to lay aside our hate.  
Be we all brothers now.

*They clasp hands,*

*2nd Of.* Ah! would before  
We had been wise as now.

*3rd Of.* A glorious peace  
For both our nations might have been ar-  
ranged,—

Both victors, and each twice as strong and rich  
As ever heretofore.

*Rod.* What! do you think  
The people would consent to such alliance?

*1st Of.* Methinks in truth they might.

*Rod.* 'Tis not too late.  
Go forth and seek their pleasure. If, indeed,  
They'll lay aside their feud and love each other  
And let us love each other, then I know  
My queen will live. Wilt thou not live, my queen?

*Ber.* I'll live, I'll live forever!

*Rod.* Haste, oh, haste!  
And learn the people's will.

*1st Of.* Nay, nay, my lord,  
We'll answer for the people.

*One of the queen's staff.* We in turn  
For the subjects of our queen.

*1st Of.* Then these two lands  
Are now betrothed.

*Rod.* Oh! I am weak and helpless;  
I have no marrow left; and I could weep  
Like a poor, weary child.

*Ber.* Ah! we are both  
Poor, poor, tired children, poor forsaken orphans  
Without a guardian. We are mocked and flouted  
And buffeted around the unloving world,  
The harsh and hate-filled world.

*Rod.* My bride and queen,  
Give me thy hand; 'tis mine for life and death.

*Ber.* 'Tis thine for life and life.

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### SCENE IV. *Roderick.*

*Rod.* The queen, my queen is sleeping peacefully  
And smiling in her sleep. The tide is turned,  
And life swells full. 'Tis love, 'tis love alone  
Recalleth her. I am the instrument,  
Through heaven's dear grace, of her recovery  
And the world's deliverance from this deep be-  
reavement

That would have darked the sun. I do believe  
Had I not loved her, she had died. Ah me!  
'Tis like God's own divine prerogative,  
This majesty of heart-power, to be able  
To blast and ruin, yet to choose instead  
To bless and save. These two correlatives  
Can not be separated; power to help  
Is equal to power to harm; and rich affection,  
Winning the like affection, if it swerve  
In constancy, doth blight more certainly  
Than murderous hate.

*Voice.* Ha, ha! ha, ha! ha, ha!  
The virtuous man, the self-approving man,  
The benefactor with complacent smile,  
With virgin conscience that hath never yet  
Been kissed awake from that long beauty-sleep  
Wherein 'tis still embayed. Ha, ha! ha, ha!

*Rod.* O God, shall even the moment of my tri-  
umph,

The glory of my life, shall it behold  
My reason overthrown? Have not my ways  
Been ever innocent? Why am I mocked  
And hourly thus tormented like a felon  
Reeking with guilt?

*Voice.* What of the maiden lowly  
The gentle peasant maid?  
Hath he forgot her wholly  
With whom his childhood played?

Recalls he not the valley  
The greenwood on the hill,  
Where fairy legions rally  
And dance along the rill?

Her fair cheek smiling, flushing  
Beneath his ardent gaze,  
Like a flame-tide sudden-rushing,  
Lit by the tropic blaze?

*Rod.* O God, a bolt from out thy sky  
Could not so surely blast me;  
The wrath of thine accusing eye  
Less deep in hell would cast me.

I do recall that beauteous maid,  
Recall those saintly blushes,  
Her 'drooping eyelids' timid shade,  
The long and rapturous hushes.

*Voice.* Oh, fly! oh, fly! thou courier swift  
To that far greenwood valley,  
To that wee cottage in the rift  
Of hills where fairies rally.

Oh! fly to her where now she lies,  
The fair child broken-hearted,  
Oh! fly to her where now she dies,  
Fly ere she be departed.

Oh! whisper in her dying ear  
Her lover's not untender;  
He'd not provoke the tiniest tear,  
Nor sadden or offend her.

To bring one tear he never meant,

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Or make that fair form totter ;  
He could not help the accident  
That thus he quite forgot her.

*Rod.* Who biddeth me dream  
Of a heavenly morn?—  
Impertinent theme!  
I listen with scorn.

The causer of pain,  
Involved in that woe,  
Shall struggle in vain  
To be rid of its throe.

Of my victim a part,  
I walk not alone;  
The wreck of that heart  
Hath ruined my own.

*Voice.* Behold the man of worth immense  
The blameless and the strong,  
The prodigy of innocence  
That never dreamed a wrong.

*Rod.* Though penance and pain  
Bring respiting brief,  
Or a gentler deed gain  
Some moment's relief.

Can the grave cloud my eyes  
Till no longer I see  
That look of surprise  
At harshness from me?

Offend but the least  
Of the innocent train,

And the mill-stone hath ceased  
To affright or to pain.

Who biddeth me dream  
Of a heavenly morn?—  
Impertinent theme!  
I listen with scorn.

*Voice.* He's not a deceiver:  
He never once said  
To that sweet believer,  
"Soon, soon shall we wed."

He came not oath-laden,—  
Shrewd man of the world;  
Yet the eyes of the maiden  
With grief-drops are pearled.

He's coy in advances;  
He's cautious in sport:  
Can eyes' tender glances  
Be brought into court?

No promise he proffered;  
She hath not a claim:  
No love-vow he offered;  
He's free from all blame:

Nor made he the blunder  
To tarnish her truth,—  
Too dext'rous in plunder  
For means so uncouth.

Did he need for his pleasure  
That clumsy device?  
He won the whole treasure  
By method more nice.



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'Twas her face he o'erpowered  
With glances of flame;  
'Twas her blush he deflowered  
And sullied with shame.

From the eyes of the maiden  
He drew forth her soul,  
And faintly, sweet-laden,  
Buzzed away to his hole.

He did not entwine her  
In lawless embrace;  
With luxury finer  
Despoiled he her face:

With no less completeness  
He drained her soul dry  
Of its glory and sweetness,  
Its dignity high.

At a glance's unsealing  
Her passion's rich wine  
Gushes forth till he's reeling  
With rapture divine.

With the gaze of a poet  
He drinketh her eyes:  
Not a scath will e'er show it—  
Except that she dies.

*Rod.* O locks that whiten into frost!  
O cheeks that bleach to ashes!  
O aspect like a spirit lost,  
Discerned through sulph'rous flashes!

My flesh will wither like a hag's;

My powers will all desert me;  
My limbs will hang like tattered rags;  
A frown will disconcert me.

*Voice.* Ah! here's our great divinity,  
One of the world's elite,  
Quite free from all affinity  
With illusion and deceit.

Even in a world of magic  
He'll be sublimely real,  
Be earnest still and tragic,  
And true to each ideal.

In all his composition  
No trace of comedy;  
Not any recognition  
Of unreality.

Ha, ha! blasphemed he proudly  
The fays' ascendancy,  
Daring to vaunt so loudly  
His independency.

But now he seemeth lowly,  
A trifle diffident;  
He now will tread more slowly,  
With haughty forehead bent.

*R. I.* Oh! I'll betake me back once more  
To that poor peasant maiden.  
I'll bid her live, and I'll restore  
Her spirit sorrow-laden.

*Voice.* He'll leave the queen that he hath sworn  
To cherish and protect;

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That love that he hath proudly worn  
He'll recklessly reject.

'Tis not his memory fails him now;  
Deliberately he'll choose  
To violate that sacred vow,  
That queenly trust abuse.

*Rod.* My thought to frenzy hath been turned,  
My pulse to mad distraction;  
My brain to lava hath been burned;  
Palsied my every action.

*Voice.* Ha, ha! ha, ha! one only way,  
O fervid heart-distracter  
To make all right and clear as day,  
And be a benefactor;

Just wed the ladies both, you know,  
A double bliss to render;  
Yourself already do you show  
Large-hearted, warm and tender.

How many others round the world  
Have you so kindly courted;  
How many other eyes impearled  
With dew not yet reported?

So much the better. Let each heart  
Be thrilled with rapture gentle.  
Wed all these weeping maids and start  
A harem Oriental.

*Rod.* I cannot act or think again,  
Or know the Sabbath quiet,  
Or meet the gaze of brother-men,  
But only rave and riot.

*Voice.* Ha, ha! ha, ha! ha, ha! ha!  
Ha, ha! ha, ha! ha, ha! ha!

*An Officer enters.*

*Rod.* Oh! take this crown that I profane  
And give it to some yeoman,  
Some simple brow with ne'er a stain,  
Some eagle eye of Roman,  
Not flinching in this guilty pain  
At glance of friend or foeman.

Far, far off in a sunny glade  
A beauteous form is lying,  
A gentle and a spotless maid,  
Whose laugh was soft as sighing,  
Whom I have won, whom I betrayed  
And left her slowly dying.

*Of.* Thou noble prince whom all revere,  
All pity for thy sorrow,  
Oh! list to me, and strength and cheer  
From out the future borrow;  
This malady will disappear  
Forever on the morrow.

We all pronounce thee free from guile;  
Why wilt thou not believe us?  
Gracious thy welcoming erewhile,  
Once more in warmth receive us.  
We languish for thy generous smile;  
Why must thou longer grieve us?

*Rod.* Alas! I perish for a sign  
Of human fellow-feeling;  
But all in vain, all men decline  
To hear my sin's revealing;

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And I must bear this guilt of mine  
Without a hope of healing.

Oh! I will flee to one within  
That hath a heart more tender;  
The credence I would die to win  
She'll not refuse to render;  
She'll help me bear my cross of sin  
With courage love shall lend her.

*Scene V. Bertha and Roderick.*

*Rod.* My own heart's queen, I come to thee  
again,

Not strong and confident, but now at last,  
As ne'er before, soul-humbled, doubting now  
My own integrity, convinced at last  
My nature is not noble. Drive me forth  
From thine all-hallowed presence, nevermore  
To look upon thy face.

*Ber.* My love, my love,  
Thou shalt not thus accuse my noble king.  
Thou'rt ill and needest cheering. Here's my hand.  
Wilt thou not take it? Still thy hand doth hang  
Limp and uneager. Then myself will clasp  
Thy hand in both mine own, and hold it close  
Till with this boundless life within my veins,  
Which thou thyself hast kindled, I succeed  
In warming thee, and so restore to me  
My own high tower of strength on which  
through life

I'll lean in confidence, and luxury  
Of willing weakness. O my king and hero  
Loved and revered!

*Rod.*

Alas!

*Voice.*

Ha, ha! ha, ha!

*Rod.* My love! my love! in vain, in vain  
I long to draw more near her;  
A numbness comes o'er heart and brain;  
I cannot see or hear her;  
My deepening love is deepening pain,  
I shrink away and fear her.

Oh! she is farther from my reach  
Than zenith from the nadir;  
Beyond all sight, beyond all speech  
Her angel hath conveyed her—  
Beyond all prayer, though I beseech  
To injure or to aid her.

Oh! we are now of different kind;  
All vain is my devotion.  
She holds my hand. I cannot find  
One lingering glad emotion,  
Though once I struggled rapture-blind  
In passion deep as ocean.

My guilt hath made the mighty void  
Henceforth to yawn around me;  
My sin forever hath destroyed  
The kinship dear that bound me  
In love and gladness unalloyed,  
And with its glory crowned me.

Not death or hate, not time or space  
Could so completely sever;  
I gaze on her receding face  
With piteous endeavor,  
Like Orpheus on that tender grace  
That smiled no more forever.

*Bar.* I feel my vital forces fail,  
Since love no more doth flourish.

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*Rod.* My love though true doth not avail  
To comfort or to cherish.

*Ber.* Thy hand is cold, thy lips are pale;  
Together must we perish.

### ACT FOURTH.

*Scene. Rural scene again. Roderick and Bertha, in rustic attire and surrounded by fairies, are seated on the ground with closed eyes, Bertha holding Roderick's hand in both her own. They open their eyes. Bertha, with a start, drops the hand of Roderick, whereupon he seizes her hand.*

*Fairies.* Ha! ha! the charm's complete;  
Dance we now with flying feet.  
Ne'er shall be our charm undone;  
Hands are joined and hearts are one.

*Ber.* Oh! haste we, haste we quick away!  
How horrid 'tis to hear and see!

*Rod.* Ah, no! ah, no! we'll stay, we'll stay!  
'Tis wine and rapture unto me!

*Ber.* They'll do us harm;  
I dread some charm.

*Rod.* Nonsense, my dear! why do you fear?  
Are you not safe while I am near?

*Ber.* 'Tis true I have no cause for fear  
So long a time as you are here.

*Fairies.* Ha! ha! the maiden coy!  
Ha! ha! the timid boy!

They are man and woman now,  
With the flame upon the brow.

Ah! the jolly, jolly jest!  
Happy, cosy household nest!

Be it full to overflowing  
With the coming and the going  
Of the chubbiest, merriest brood  
That in rivalry e'er wooed  
Of tumultuous tendernesses  
Mother's kisses and caresses.

*Ber.* Oh! the frivolous, rude elves!  
Will they not betake themselves  
Far, far away?

Let us hasten from their haunts  
And escape the pranks and taunts  
All, all the day.

*Rod.* Then promise first, where'er we be,  
In every wind and weather,  
Although we stay, although we flee,  
We still shall be together.

*Ber.* (*while the fairies dance and leap in extravagant glee.*)

Why, to confess I do not mind,  
Your faults are all so venial,  
That your society I find  
Not often uncongenial.





# EMPIRE OF TALINIS

## *Dramatis Personae.*

Camot, a minister of King Varian.

Cotaminus, prime-minister and judge.

Cotamina, daughter of Cotaminus.

Ena, loved by Nirus and Phinon.

Melno, a subordinate official.

Mira, a coquette.

Nirus, a captain of volunteers.

Phinon, friend and counterpart of Nirus.

Reston, a minister of King Varian.

Varian, king of Talinis.

Victor, a general in the royal army.

Miscellaneous: Phinon's mother, a clerk, a masked assassin, a workingman, a herald, ministers, officers, soldiers, senators, nobles, citizens, courtiers, friends of Victor, messengers, attendants, actors, singers.

## ACT FIRST.

*I. Palace of King Varian of Talinis. Cotaminus and Nirus.*

*Co.* I bid you welcome, Nirus. You are the first  
Of the new captains of our volunteers

To present yourself. Your punctual patriotism  
Will be remembered. Your physique and face  
Commend the wisdom of your neighbors' choice.

*Ni.* I thank you for your kindness.

*Co.* Your commission

Already here awaits you. I expect you

To win promotion and some modest fame.

*Ni.* 'Tis not for fame I don the garb of war,

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Not fame, but service, helping to protect  
The guiltless people from the punishment  
That not themselves deserve.

*Co.* That not themselves?  
An ominous phrase! Pray tell me how the peasants

Regard the impending war.

*Ni.* I beg your pardon  
For inadvertently intruding thus  
My personal sentiments. I have no right  
To speak for others.

*Co.* Give your own opinion:  
Half of a statesman's business is to study  
The views of manly yeomen.

*Ni.* Had the foe  
For our offence a fair indemnity  
Honestly sought, nor pressed so ruthless thus  
Upon our weakest moment, while we stand  
Guilty before the world, ne'er would I draw  
The opposing sword. Nations know not remorse;  
We cannot trust their vengeance; they exceed  
The bounds of retribution, and thus wrong  
Goes on redoubling. For the people's need  
I draw my sword, and not to vindicate  
A policy of state.

*Co.* Ha, ha! your worth,  
You sturdy yeomen, sinew of the land,  
Gives you much license. Serve the people still  
To the profit of the king. An honest man  
Is not without utility, despite  
The divided allegiance. [*Exit.*]

*Ni.* Ah! my native land,  
Would I might feel for thee the fervent zeal,  
The impassioned reverence that blessed me once,  
When first I learned the story of thy youth  
In its fresh dedication. How I thrilled

With that new knowledge, reading the dull page  
In epic meter, every line a trope,  
And flame-rhymes wrapping the insipid words  
Of the rude text-book! Glorious wast thou then,  
A new Athenæ. Wilt thou yet, my country,  
Reveal without a flaw thy nobler self,  
And stand a saint of nations? Would indeed  
That a whole nation might be like a man,  
Ennobled fully by some single will  
In consecration high. It might be thus  
With a great man for the king. So might the  
ideal

Be made one with the real. Forbidden fancy!  
The quest is vain forever! None the less,  
I'll fight for thee, my country, as indeed  
Thou wert that land ideal. All thy sins  
I'll turn to virtues. Yea, Madonna-like  
I'll picture thee to fire my chivalry  
To the utmost limit. Then I'll force a wrath  
To nerve my arm; and if I feel abate  
The martial heat, I'll make a last appeal  
To my own wrongs, my own immortal wrongs,  
Wrought by my brethren, the mere thought of  
which

Maketh a man a tiger. I'll forget  
My country was the wronger, and transfer  
My vengeance to the enemy. Each foe  
Shall seem the vice incarnate that hath wrought  
Such ruin in my hopes. Rekindle now,  
O passion of revenge, to teach my sword  
The battle-fury. Come, thou devil of hate,  
And do angelic service in maintaining  
The ideal of patriotism. [*Exit.*]

*II. Battle-field. Phinon discovers Nirus wounded.*

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*Phi.* What!  
Slain unaware, come I abstractedly,  
To view again my poor, deserted body,  
Ere I depart forever? Ah, it stirs!  
There's still a soul within.

*Ni.* Alas, alas!  
Can I be now delirious that your face  
Looks so much like my own?

*Phi.* To me, the lone one,  
My God hath sent this blessing of a brother  
To attest his fatherhood. Methinks I feel  
A sudden psychic thrill. [*Nirus faints.*]

Poor, stricken life,  
I look upon your weakness and your pain  
With pity's rapture. You are now mine own,  
Mine own henceforth, and to me dearer far  
Than all Talinis. Let the battle now  
Take its own course; to you do I devote  
My loyalty and service. I'll not think  
That you have thus been given me at last  
Only to die in my arms.

*A Soldier enters.*

Will you assist  
To bear this comrade?  
*Sol.* Ah! you two have met,  
Whose strange resemblance made you both dis-  
tinguished  
Before even this day's glory when in tumult,  
Subsiding now, the laurelled victory  
Has pointed out her heroes, and all eyes  
Seek you and Nirus, thinking each of twain  
Is he that checked the flight and led the charge  
And consummated this immortal triumph  
By the crowning feat of valor. All this day  
He has wrought wonders, foremost of the fight,  
That saves the nation's honor. [*In the meantime*]

*Nirus has been restored to consciousness. Exeunt, Nirus carried.*

*III. Palace. King Varian, Cotaminus, Camot, Reston.*

*Nirus is borne in convalescent.*

*Va.* Noble youth,  
I summon you to give to you such honor  
As you have merited by valiant deeds,  
As well as natural parts. I wish that you,  
Not the degenerate Castux, were my cousin  
And next of kin. If I had not a hope  
To find some royal bride of blood untaint,  
Whose fresh vitality may yet renew  
Our stock effete, and from the ancient root  
Call forth a fruitage of young royalty  
Of the old-time fibre,—if I did not hope  
For such a happy fortune, I would choose  
None other than yourself to be my heir  
And the father of new monarchs. Lowly station  
Should not disqualify you whom I find  
The kingliest youth of all. So much I say  
To show how high an estimate I place  
Upon your merits. Yet no empty praise  
Do I bestow upon you. I confirm  
With more substantial tokens, how sincere  
My commendations are; for I appoint you  
To a full generalship, with confidence  
That so I raise a mighty bulwark up  
To be my throne's defence, and no less surely  
To be my people's safety.

*Ni.* Sir, I thank you.  
To a young heart there is no boon more precious  
Than a hero's approbation. I will strive  
To emulate your own high deeds of valor  
And patriot toil, that you may not regret

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This day's great honor. In my chair I'll ride  
To the field of carnage, not permitting wounds  
To arrest my service.

*Va.* Come within now, Nirus.  
I have a question of diplomacy  
To tax your wit. [*Exeunt Varian, and Nirus carried.*]

*Res.* Must we be suitors now  
To this mere stripling, forced to fawn on him,  
Or lose our master's favor?

*Ca.* A mere clown!  
Fit for a swineherd!

*Res.* He is a goodly lad,  
Worthy to be the shepherd of the king,  
An office he might hold with dignity,  
Winning respect such as we ever give  
To seemliness in place; but introduced  
Into the palace, to an atmosphere  
So foreign to his habits and his birth,  
His rustic charm will quickly disappear,  
Turning to sheepishness. He is too big,  
And is not graced with ugliness sufficient  
For a court-fool.

*Co.* I warn you that this clown  
Has lordly qualities. King Varian  
Is a shrewd diviner, and has reared indeed,  
By this day's policy, a bulwark strong,  
Where some shall dash themselves. 'Twere well  
for us

To be alert, lest we be all hereafter  
Transformed to shepherds or to fools, and left  
To tune our pipes or heave our jokes alone,  
Superfluous at court.

*IV. Chamber of the Ministers. Cotaminus,  
Camot and Reston.*

*1st Messenger enters.*

*1st M.* The battle at Menalapa is lost,  
Despite the glorious efforts of young Nirus,  
And all our other heroes. [*Exit.*]

*Res.* We are ruined!

*2nd Messenger enters.*

*2nd M.* The haughty chieftain of the Clerian  
hordes

Demands a billion francs indemnity,  
And swears that he will never leave the land  
Till all is paid. [*Exit.*]

*3rd Messenger enters.*

*3rd M.* The army is in rout.  
Nirus and Victor now alone remain  
To guard the capital. [*Exit.*]

*4th Messenger enters.*

*4th M.* The king is raging.  
He swears, whate'er they do, he will not treat,  
Nor indemnify the foe. [*Exit.*]

*5th Messenger enters.*

*5th M.* The king so raves  
That no one dares approach him. [*Exit.*]  
*Co.* Let me hasten. [*Exit.*]

*6th Messenger enters.*

*6th M.* I come from Nirus, begging you post-  
pone

All proffers of submission; for he hopes,  
With new recruits now rallying to his summons,  
To retrieve our hopes. [*Exit.*]

*Ca.* I would that now Prince Castux  
Might be our king!

*Res.* He may be.

*Ca.* This is no time  
For common means. The king is surely mad;  
And the country will be prostrate at the feet  
Of Nirus and Cotaminus.



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*Res.*

What tumult?

*Clerians enter. The ministers escape.*

*Song.*

O Cleria, now is thy dignity gained;  
The crown of maturity graces thy brow;  
And promise and symmetry newly attained  
Bless the eyes of the nations that look on thee  
now.

No longer inviting the martyrs' defence,  
Thou art grown to a Titan with temples aflame;  
The empires of earth are thine to dispense,  
And genius awakes at the sound of thy name.

Be earnest and steadily scatter thy ray;  
For the stars of thy yearning look soberly down;  
Hold thy torch up to heaven; the joy of today  
And the hope of posterity shine in thy crown.

*V. Assembly of the Ministers. Cotaminus, Camot, Reston and others.*

*1st Messenger enters.*

*1st M.* I bring appalling news. Our royal liege  
Is just found lately murdered in his bed,  
No trace of the doers. [*Exit.*

*Co.* Oh, my royal liege!

*Ca.* Is the king slain?

*Res.* The king, the king is slain!

*Great confusion. 2nd Messenger enters.*

*2nd M.* I bring most glorious tidings; Nirus,  
at last,

Our youthful chief, with new-recruited troops,  
Has overwhelmed the Clerians. Even now  
They are embarking for their voyage home.

[*Exit.*

Co. How glad were we at this, had other news  
But been awhile deferred! But now, alas!  
Tidings like this can not even mitigate  
Our greater sorrow. Now the land will mourn,  
And not be glad of triumph.

Res. And the king  
Lived not to hear it!

Co. Yet in his new peace  
He needs not pity's ministry. Behold!

*[To the people, who press forward tumultuously, addressing them from the door.]*

There is a grandeur in a prince's death  
To recompense him for the loss of life,  
And make him enviable. Who would not die  
To be thus mourned by millions? Is not that  
The crowning triumph of an august life,  
Which death alone can bring? We had not  
known

How great a soul hath lived, but by the void  
Succeeding its departure. Luminous Sun,  
This sudden eclipse shall witness to thy glory,  
To the utmost bounds of earth. Ah! there's a  
splendor,

Yea, there's a rapture when a nation mourns,  
Prouder than grief. That pageantry of woe  
In its own gloom exults. The hero dieth,  
And not in vulgar tears men celebrate  
Bereavement so sublime; but glorious song  
And eloquence divine swell heavenward,  
Like incense from a thousand altar-flames,  
To make his tomb triumphal.

Ca. Ah, our hero!

1st Voice. Our martyred chief!

2nd Voice. Our sainted king!

3rd Voice. Our father!

4th Voice. Peace to his ashes!

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*5th Voice.*

Glory to his name!

*Res.* May heaven now speed the princely Castux home

To take his birthright and compose the land  
From all its agitation!

*VI. Phinon's Home. Phinon and Nirus.*

*Phi.* Mother is absent. While we wait for her,  
Let us converse. During the recent war,  
To prove your genius, short has been the time,  
And shorter for this wound; yet that brief time  
Has brought promotion and renown, and won  
The royal smile.

*Ni.* The time were vain as brief,  
If there were nothing in it to recall,  
Except what little favor I have won,  
And my still pettier service. More I value,  
And hold more memorable these recent days  
For your new friendship; you have saved my  
life,

And still preserve me living with your love.

*Phi.* And you have given another life to me—  
Taught me to think, pure of authority,  
In simple, honest quest of simple truth,  
From all traditions free.

*Ni.* Ah, me! indeed,  
Already have I won my laurel crown  
Of a saved soul, to justify my living,  
And compensate for pain! My dearest friend,  
My other dearer self, in thee I plant,  
With righteous motives, this indignant flame  
Of consecrated wrath—a touch of the real  
Of hate's vindictiveness to energize  
The ideal of truth and love. Thyself I choose  
To be my minister, because in thee  
Smoulder infernal passions eager to serve

Thy lofty intent. May we not utilize  
Fierce instincts in ourselves and in each other  
To further a noble purpose?

*Phi.* Comradeship,  
How it firms the heart! Ah! Nature surely meant  
That we be twins, ere some untrusty angel  
To different families brought the pattern souls,  
Placing us far asunder, making life  
Cruel with common pangs. But now at last  
Let us correct that error. Side by side  
We'll celebrate an hourly sacrament  
Of sympathy ideal. As these forms  
Are thus alike, even so must be akin  
The generating spirits. Ah! what joy  
To have your presence ever here so close  
Like my own soul projected at my side  
For me to see and touch!

*Ni.* Mine now at last  
A friend, a bosom friend! I had not hoped  
For such a triumph.

*Phi.* Triumph in my friendship?  
I the unknown, save for a face resembling  
The face of Nirus! Humbled am I, Nirus,  
Feeling so little worthy.

*Ni.* Nay; to me  
You are the hero, none the less distinguished  
For being still obscure; and I, being selfish,  
Am happy thus to keep you to myself,  
And jealous lest the world should find you out,  
And take you from me. Ah! we twain, methinks,  
Must keep beside each other all our days,  
And re-enforce each other's solitude  
Of life and thought. Is not our task too hard  
To live on nobly when men look askance  
With half-suspicion? Let us feel henceforth  
That though the world may outlaw and despise

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We still may have each other. Full of peace  
We can remain from the harsh world apart,  
And keep our exiled natures gentle still  
With mutual sympathy.

*Phinon's Mother enters.*

*Moth.* What ails my eyes  
That I seem to see you double?

*Ni.* One is Phinon;  
The other Phinon's friend.

*Moth.* Most wonderful!

*Phi.* And know you *quid* from *quo*?

*Moth.* None but a mother  
Had e'er distinguished. Is this, then, the friend?  
Why did you never tell me that this friend  
Was your twin brother? Stay, my other son,  
And dwell with us; for you are lone as we,  
And we need one another.

*Ni.* Gratefully  
Do I accept your welcome. He and I  
Are so near one that we are placed, it seems,  
In separate bodies only for the joy  
Of friendship's dear communion. I must feel  
His mother to be mine.

### ACT SECOND.

*I. Phinon.*

*Phi.* I shall not stammer now when I reply,  
And feebly meet the glances of my brethren,  
Or feel such isolation. No more now  
Am I so different. I have found my way  
Into the mystic circle, and partake  
Of the universal human unity  
Vital from love.

*Nirus enters.*

*Ni.* I'm back again, my Phinon.

*Phi.* Did you see Ena there?

*Ni.* My dearest friend,  
Though I have found in you my soul's high  
priest,

In her at last I find its deity.

*Phi.* And, having found that deity, dispense  
With priestly ministrations. Friendship's creed  
As soon as this divine has been attained  
Must grow superfluous.

*Ni.* Why! are you jealous,  
As if a friendship dear as yours and mine  
Could now be crowded out? Friendship and love  
Are different entities and coexist  
Like matter and spirit.

*Phi.* As matter is to spirit,  
So friendship, too, to love,—superfluous,  
And yet compatible. Methinks, indeed,  
I can relinquish you as willingly  
As a parent gives his dearest child to one  
More qualified to bless.

*Ni.* Ah! you are pale.  
Why do you seem to emphasize that you,  
Though trying to avoid it. I recall  
The words you spoke when briefly last we met,  
As you were coming thence; a recent wealth  
Had filled your bosom; you would wait for me,  
And tell me all, and seek my sympathy,  
As I now yours. And then again today,  
Thrusting aside my eager salutation,  
You asked of Ena; but that magic word,  
Meant to be prologue of your tremulous shrift,  
I seized as introduction to my own,  
Forgetting to marvel.

*Phi.* The sympathy you sought  
I yield you, Nirus, from a soul sincere  
That love and pain enrich. Were I more strong,  
You had not known at all. I check my dreaming,

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And sink back in the shadow.

*Ni.* Ah! methinks  
I was away from you, or I had known  
That friendship is sufficient. If in truth  
This is your friendship, I renounce my love  
With cheerful heart.

*Phi.* Nay; mine this sacrifice,  
This joy and pain, to see united thus  
The two I love most.

*Ni.* We have always yearned  
Toward the self-same objects. Now we love  
One woman, too. Yours is the prior claim;  
You knew her first; your soul's maturer, then,  
And worthier of her.

*Phi.* Have you not seen of late  
How but a portion of your nature's glory  
Has conquered me? How then with all its  
wealth

Will you o'erwhelm that spirit sensitive  
And draw her to your bosom! No other power  
That moveth so an innocent young heart  
As the knowledge sweet of love.

*Ni.* Let us both go  
And bid her choose between us, or perchance  
Reject us both. How will she choose? Will love  
For one of us be wise enough to find  
A world of difference in our lineaments?  
Or can she look prophetic to the future  
And see our paths diverge?

*Phi.* And must I find  
That we can take no blessing for ourselves  
Without denying others? Be this true,  
All life and love are false and valueless,  
Fittingly ended.

*Ni.* Come and be my rival  
In wholesome emulation. This dark mood

Will only leave you stronger than before.

*Phi.* 'Tis not a mood; 'tis my own proper state;  
For happiness is but a quality,  
Not a condition; and when happiness  
Is in a nature's horologe, joy comes  
In spite of adverse chances. Misery,  
If it be destined to a soul, fails not,  
Though every evil spirit were perverse  
To execute the sentence. Ena now  
Is safe once more. I will not seek again  
To share my curse with her.

*Ni.* She is an angel,  
Who, with her tender cherishing, hath power  
To take away that curse.

*Phi.* Beyond my reach  
Is converse with the angels; and although  
I chance to meet them, I am no Israel  
To wrestle with them. Go you in my stead,  
Taking my love to re-enforce your own,  
And give you double right—like some true prince  
In whom two royal dynasties converge,  
Till disloyalty is dumb. [*Exit.*

*Ni.* If I attain  
The peace of this my dream, and win at last  
Her tranquil presence, at her gentle side  
I'll stifle out ambition and resentment,  
And live the life ideal; and my song  
Shall breathe along the world its music mild  
Of love's poetic joy, with many a burst  
Of love-taught wisdom echoing sublime  
With rich life-revelations.

*II. Ena's Home. Ena and Nirus.*

*Ena.* Nirus, I sent for you to let you know  
That I have found out all. The modest Phinon,  
Though he refused to come and for himself



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Maintain his suit, has found, indeed, in you,  
A faithful advocate. Your letter reached him  
With its announcement that the heart of Ena,  
Through your diplomacy, had been achieved  
In his behalf. He writes that hitherward  
He straightway comes, his laurels to assume,  
Like a conquering hero. He reveals, moreover,  
What I dreamed not,—the rivalry in love  
'Twixt you and him. Yourself you sacrifice,  
But in so doing canonize your name  
In my memory. If you prize that habitation,  
You will be consoled.

Ni. Consoled and cheered indeed,  
I thank you for my friend and for myself  
That him you love. I never could be happy,  
Seeing my friend unhappy. And today  
My lot's not pitiable. My love remains,  
And your esteem remains; and I am rich  
Inestimably in both. All my life long  
I enthrone you in a soul you know devout,  
And pay you my chief worship. Watch my life,  
And if you find it noble you may feel  
That still I love you. Every honor now  
That I attain, you share with me. I go  
To live alone, and yet to live for you,  
As if you were my own. Long have I yearned  
For such a dedication, for an hour  
When some devouter act, pre-eminent  
Among my daily deeds, might close the past  
And separate it from me, make an era  
Wherefrom to date my future. Now has come  
The longed-for era. This my love for you  
Inaugurates the new life in my heart  
And shuts the past all out. Ena, farewell!  
I need not see you more. I need but feel  
That you are in the universe. That knowledge

Will make life worth my living.

*Ena.* Will you wait,

And help me welcome Phinon?

*Ni.* Nay; 'twere better

I hasten back. I'll meet him on the way,

Refreshing him upon the tedious road

With tidings of you. All beatitudes

Cover you robe-like! [*Exit.*]

*Ena.* Bless him! But my Phinon,

Oh, Phinon, my dear Phinon, dearest Phinon,

My sweet-voiced singer with the deep, deep brow

And sad, sad eyes, so sad, so deep, unlike,

Unlike all others, let my Phinon come—

I can not wait. [*Sings.*]

Ah! now I love, and the world is fair,

And my heart is wondrous pure,

And music pulses all the air,

And noble thoughts endure.

Now beauty is bright, and evil dims,

And virtue is not rare.

Be now no song but sacred hymns,

No speech henceforth but prayer.

Oh! be mine eyes uplifted now,

And my hands crossed on my breast;

For the wreathed rays are on my brow,

And the holy robes invest.

### III. *Nirus.*

*Ni.*

Losing her,

I lose my brethren all. How I had hoped,

Having her in my home to help and teach me,

That I might learn to live a social life,

Rejoicing in the love and gratitude

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Of cheered and strengthened hearts! Her presence there

Would give me courage to endure the terror  
Of human contact; and her precious beauty  
Would keep me light of heart, and lend my lips  
Vivacious fire; the honor of her love  
Would give a confidence and dignity  
And self-command that ne'er could be conferred  
By rank imperial. I were more than royal,  
If she stood by my side. Alas! I lose her;  
And losing her I lose the whole bright world,  
Till an eloquent death regain it, till at last  
Such utterance I may give to finer tones  
Of cultured souls that after my departure  
I shall have part in that society  
Forbidden to me living. [*Sings.*

Forth from thy face into the gloom of old,  
Whence late I passed;  
Into the gloom, into the silence cold,  
The shadows vast.

Forth from thy face, forth from the sacred  
light,  
The joy and peace;  
Forth from thy holy face into the blight  
That doth not cease.

Into the dark, but not with darkened soul,  
As late I came;  
Forth from thy face, wearing a gloriole  
Of sacred flame.

Into the dark, lifting the holy light  
For all to see;  
Forth from thy face to spread the glory bright  
Kindled by thee.

Into the dark, bearing my sacred pain,  
A priceless store;  
Forth from thy face, blessing the precious gain  
Forevermore.

Forth from thy face with consecrated heart,  
Flower-pure at last;  
Forth from thy face forever I depart  
Into the past.

*Phinon enters.*

*Ni.* Phinon, my friend!

*Pki.* Now, Nirus, do I feel  
My poor life nobled.

*Ni.* Ah! my laureled victor,  
You triumph not o'er me. I, too, am crowned,  
And have a world of thoughts to guard devoutly,  
Wherein she dwelleth.

*Phi.* Ah, how zephyr-like  
Her every movement!

*Ni.* Scarce surprising were it,  
If she should float among the heavenly clouds,  
Visiting earth no more.

*Phi.* If she flies not,  
'Tis only that she thinks it dignified  
To walk so queen-like here along the ground,  
Her every motion music.

*Ni.* Oh! she is Joy  
Come down from heaven to earth, afflicted here  
With earthly sorrow, yet continuing  
To be Joy's self.

*Phi.* And she is Grace descended  
To be our minister, her beauteous shape  
Bearing but such faint traces of earth's flaw  
As signify a gentle martyrdom,  
Making the grace more sweet.

*Ni.* And she is Love,

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Dwelling amid the hatreds of mankind;  
Yet, in her pity of men's alienations,  
Becoming Love the more.

*Phi.* And Purity,  
Tortured of human passion, and thereby,  
With all the added stimulus of passion,  
Grown more intensely pure. How Ena soothed,  
Even from the first, how quickly soothed in me  
Exhausting passion till it wholly ceased,  
And then surprised me by creating in me  
A new, serener and sublimer passion  
With her its center! I am all at peace  
With the dear thought of her.

*Ni.* She gives her peace  
To all that find her presence; but for Phinon  
Awaits the honor of her hourly blessing.

*Phi.* All others must approach her timidly,  
Then go away unglorified; but I—  
The very sanctuary of her arms  
Will be my daily dwelling. What weird fate,  
What miracle of chance hath brought her hither  
Unto the earth, when myriad worlds around  
Were trembling for her presence? Why our  
planet

Thus chosen out of all? And why am I  
The chosen of all men? I stand exalted,  
Conspicuous in the boundless universe  
With this supreme distinction. What an awe  
Will now invest me in the sight of men,  
Coming thus from her presence every morn,  
And every evening going back once more  
To renew my halo!

*Ni.* Phinon, my dear friend!

*Phi.* What do I care for coronation days  
Of royal rulers? Or for primal eras  
Of mightiest revolutions? In that hour

When we are recreated into one,  
All history's trivial grandeur we shall scorn;  
All other days will be no more remembered,  
All eras be forgotten and ignored  
In that Apocalypse. Ah! if the world  
Persist unchanged, and sorrow do not pass,  
And sin cease not, then let me die, nor know  
That I have been thus mocked.

*Ni.* Phinon, my friend!

*Phi.* Oh! I did dream of gazing on my love,  
The rapture of her undiluted presence,  
Her lily presence, on some tropic eve,  
Upon some blessed Sabbath-eve of life,  
The awe and beauty and the sacred wonder,  
And merry-lightsome grace, divinely free,  
From those toil-coverings free that we indue  
To keep our forms refined from boisterous touch  
Of the rude air, free from those snowy clouds  
Some tropic Sabbath-time when in my arms,  
My cherishing arms, she hath no longer need  
Of other protection.

*Ni.* Phinon! Phinon!

*Phi.* What have I done? What have I said?  
Alas!

Have I been cruel to my benefactor?  
Have I been mad? Have I been blasphemous?

*Ni.* 'Twere blasphemy, indeed, if less than worship!

Only be moderate, Phinon; we must guard  
With firm restraint our nature's poesy,  
Lest it absorb us and contract our minds  
To impotence. Has your deep being power,  
Out of our little, common, temporal life,  
To secrete this infinite passion? Thus you prove  
The infinite in yourself.

*Phi.* Nirus, I go;

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I long for Ena's presence. [*Exit.*  
*Ni.* Farewell, Phinon!  
 I fear for Ena. Oh! the violent Phinon  
 Will never give her peace. Month after month  
 The darkling night will gather round her head,  
 And I shall not be near. I cannot go  
 To learn if she be happy, if her face  
 Give evidence of sorrow. If by chance  
 I found her weeping, I should have no right  
 To offer comfort, none to kiss her hand,  
 And let my soul look from my eyes a moment,  
 And tell her how I love her, and implore  
 That she no longer grieve. I have no hope,  
 No hope henceforth, since I can do no good  
 To her I love. I feel so deep a need  
 To care for her, I cannot understand  
 Why she does not need me. My own lone heart  
 I pity so that I forget and blend  
 With my self-pity pity for her, too,  
 Although she is so glad, as if our lives  
 Made up one tragedy, related close  
 In mutual separation. But no more  
 Of weak, unmanly plaints! Why thus expend  
 Upon anxiety so frivolous,  
 Regret so petty, all my soul's sublime.  
 Godlike capacity for pain? Methinks  
 Some great remorse were nobler than a life  
 Thus occupied with discontent so vile.  
 Why should we let ourselves be throttled thus  
 By base repinings, when 'twere possible  
 Like Titans in a tempest of thunderbolts  
 To be consumed? Henceforth, denied forever  
 The sweeter private ministries of home,  
 With all their lowly peace, I'll serve her still  
 In more heroic fashion. She that else  
 Had been my tender Psyche, half a child,

To glorify her name and justify  
Love so ambitious, I will draw all men  
To crown me with their praise; and all my fame  
Shall be for her, and my renown shall stand  
A thousand years 'mid history's shifting sands,  
A pyramid for her!

Ni. Dearest Ena,  
I knew when first I met thee that at last  
My soul had now attained its dignity,  
Achieved its perfect love. The minor peace  
Of lesser presences that one by one  
In growing nobleness have gathered round,  
And blest me for a time, that minor peace  
Just kept me living and preserved my soul  
For this true love that comes in at the close  
And dignifies me perfectly. I chose thee,  
Because thou wast most noble; and today  
I know I have not lost thee. While I live  
Thou wilt be nearer, realer to me  
As I become more manly; thou art more near,  
More real than the living. Since at last  
I love a spirit, I must henceforth be  
Myself a spirit.

This doubt mankind have long expressed,  
Amid their troubled, anxious quest



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Around the world for joy complete,  
If life be glad, if life be sweet.

Now one can answer—well he knows;  
When hope is gone, all solace goes;  
So 'tis not life, must be confessed,  
Not life, but hope, 'tis hope is blest.

*Ni.* How fares it with my Phinon? I have  
longed

To give you consolation, and receive  
An answering consolation for myself.  
In vain, you seem to flee me.

*Phi.* Yes, my friend,  
I flee you, though I love. Each human face  
Hath in it something maddening. Have you seen  
Brutes, when they die, go off to die alone?  
So human souls in mortal agony  
Forget that they have brethren. Crises come,  
When all is in suspense, our peace, our hope,  
Our life, our virtue, and we cannot guess  
What fate impends; a change, we know is nigh,  
And wait in terror. Let me go, my friend;  
My restless soul impels me.

*Ni.* Go not yet;  
Wait but a moment; let me give you comfort,  
Or join in your despair.

*Phi.* Yes, I will stay,  
And bid farewell, and yield to you once more,  
As hitherto, my soul. Beside a grave  
I have grown thoughtful. Wont were we to say:  
"So long as high thoughts live to bless the world,  
So we perpetuate our earnestness  
In thought and action, what the need to care  
About our consciousness? Without a doubt  
The future will preserve our loftiest thought;  
Let the rest fade away." But why so sanguine

About that conservation? Is the earth  
A treasury safe? Or must our spirit-wealth  
Consume at last in universal flames?  
What winds ethereal to waft the seed  
To other planets, and perpetuate  
Our psychic glories? Goodness hath no rank,  
If it fuse at last in the universal chaos.  
*Ni.* Phinon, for aught we know, the transient  
earth,

And all these stars that seem to twinkle once,  
And then go out forever, may yet prove  
To be the busy factories where souls  
From fleshly molds are shaped and sent away  
To glorify the heavens. Our earth, perhaps,  
A generator of ethereal force,  
Is helping store eternity with life.  
*Phi.* It might be so, but is not. Every moment  
Derides our frantic efforts to achieve  
The sacredness we long for. What the use  
Of all this culture, and this ornament  
Of thought and sanctity that we bestow  
On these poor bodies? All that gaudy show  
Will moulder in the grave. Why all this cost  
Merely unto our burial? When I think  
Of this end, I am ready to plunge down  
In suicide of soul. How piteously,  
Here in the midst of all our rancid flesh,  
Aping the angels' gestures, we proceed,  
And in the intervals of our gluttonies  
Mumbling the prayer-thoughts that have dropped  
among us

Out of the heavens! Oh, hearts are only flesh!  
What matter be they crushed? Knowledge of  
truth

Hath never yet been gained, nor joy expressed,  
Nor love, nor grief, except with tools of flesh.

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*Ni.* What matter, so we live on earnestly,  
So we grow wise, and win our dignity,  
So we but joy and grieve and love and worship,  
And give expression to our great emotions,  
What matter for the means? Let us be glad  
That nature makes the means so beautiful;  
And if at times the senses do revolt,  
They soon come back again to their allegiance,  
And serve in reverent faith. We can upraise  
Our purest prayers to heaven while we attend  
To nature's lowliest needs; what but is sacred  
Beside a dying-couch?

*Phi.* O Ena, Ena!

*Ni.* Although death follow, yet I mean to live  
A spirit's life, and if I have no soul,  
Then on my only treasure, this frail body,  
Soul's symbol, on the earth soul's deputy,  
So agonized with acting that high part,  
On it I mean to lavish all the wealth  
And all the splendor and imperial pomp  
Of thought and aspiration and high dreams  
And consecrated effort, costly chrism  
Unto the day of my burial. I am glad  
That Ena went thus regally to death.  
Be it so with us.

*Phi.* While Ena was alive,  
The earth was beautiful; but she has gone,  
And all is changed, and even the stars look gross.

*Ni.* Ah! she has lived; and earth is beautiful,  
Luminous with her presence. In our world,  
Weirdest of planets, where a daily magic  
Transforms dead matter into spirit-life,  
We learn this much of knowledge, we discern  
That matter is spirit, since affinity  
It has with spirit, and combines with spirit  
Sweetly in them we love.

*Phi.* Beauteous Ena!  
 Image of Ena, come across my thoughts;  
 Refresh me with thy sweetness, till my mind  
 Is full of spring-time buoyancy and beauty.  
 I will try, Nirus, henceforth will I try  
 To be more pure and dignified. Forgive me  
 That I have thus intruded on your presence  
 The *ennui* of disease.

*V. Phinon.*

*Phi.* [*Sings.*

Ah, I am not so noble as I thought!  
 Nature in me hath less divinely wrought,  
 Or less completely; all hath come to naught  
 That eagerly and painfully I sought,  
 And deemed achieved, it all hath come to  
 naught.

*Nirus enters.*

O Nirus, now is time to say *farewell*,  
 As if death came. I feel myself decline  
 To my spirit's dissolution. Only a while,  
 A little while, and I shall care no more  
 For any roble thing. The evil thoughts  
 Already press upon me. Eagerness  
 For high achievement passeth; and henceforth  
 Although I see the earth is beautiful,  
 How little do I joy! As lief were I  
 'Twere only a hideous lump. No more I know  
 The love of beauty. Daily do I sink  
 And grow more careless. Soon shall I be mock-  
 ing,  
 In dull security, today's alarm,  
 Scorning high aims. But now at least, my friend,  
 The evil in me is not yet a part  
 Of my own nature. While I still resist it,  
 And while I still can hold your presence dear,

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I pray you to neglect affairs a little,  
And give your time to me. The leprosy  
Is in my blood; but not yet need I leave  
To be an outcast and to cry "Unclean"!  
Till Pity flee in terror. Even now  
A time remains for love. A little time  
The cares of life shall all be thrown aside,  
And all their selfish aims; now thoughtfulness  
And trifling charities disdained before  
I will perform, nor hoard the moments now,  
So miserly, but give them to my friends,  
And learn to hide the tears, and oftener smile,  
Because the time is short.

Ni. No, Phinon, no!  
Throw off this fancy; it will mar your peace  
If harbored thus. 'Tis nothing but a fancy,  
And has no substance.

Phi. Nirus, do not acts  
Grow out of thought? And thought cannot be  
ruled,

But masters us, comes on us from without,  
Or from the inner vagueness, where we blend  
With chaos and float backward into mist  
As a sea-god's body billows back amorphous  
Under the saline flood. When evil thoughts  
Beset me thus, what reason, pray, to hope  
That I possess some proud immunity  
At nature's partial hands? The misery  
Of sin's subjection would as fitly fall  
On me as any other; and I sit—  
We all sit passive, waiting for the lot  
That gives us glory or the hell of sin.

Ni. My friend, your lot already has been  
drawn,  
The happier destiny.

Phi. But know we not

Phinon

That even virtue in this age of matter  
Depends upon material conditions?  
How slight disorganization in the brain  
Availeth to transform the noblest man  
Into a criminal; a piece of bone  
Pressing upon the brain; a clot of blood;  
The tiny birth-germ of a wicked thought  
In parent-minds, latent for many years,  
And then evolving monstrous progeny  
Of deeds incredible!

Ni. Ah, the infliction  
Of a great thought to him that Atlas-like  
Bends to that burden! Phinon, dearest friend!  
The truth is deadly, and such thoughts as these  
Will craze us both, unless we plunge ourselves  
Into the world of action, and dilute  
This truth with phantasy. The world and we  
Shall neutralize each other. We can force  
These traffickers to think, and they in turn  
Can quench our fiery fancy. Let us seek  
Some milder mania to combat this  
Our present madness. Let us now invoke  
Some wild ambition, choose some vanity,  
And cherish that, and so ourselves delude,  
And keep this fatal fatalism down  
With sane and healthy action. Let us henceforth  
As men of action indirectly think  
Through hand and sense; thoughts do not come  
to such  
In disembodied terror, and so they  
Can still endure. But the man of contemplation,  
Gazing upon the unincarnate thought,  
That very ghost of him which haunts persistent  
His every step, will he not be destroyed,  
Unless in haste he weave some body round it,  
Making the weird ideal tangible

With the real of action?

*Phi.* Be not troubled, Nirus,  
By my fantastic dread. In last night's dreams  
It came upon me, and I'm scarcely awakened  
To know how false it is. 'Twill soon be past,  
And I shall be my old self once again.

*Ni.* And we can once more take our happy  
walks

In care-free peace. Ah! Phinon, we may suffer,  
But shall not perish. We have looked too high,  
And grown too fond of starlight e'er to change  
And gaze on base things.

*Phi.* If it prove otherwise,  
And I must have infirmity or sin  
To humble all my hopes, my dearest friend,  
I call you now to witness that I choose  
Virtue and joy, if it is granted me  
To make my own election. I reject  
Sorrow and sin. Not by my own consent  
Shall this choice be reversed.

*Ni.* Then he assured  
That it will hold till chaos come again.

*Phi.* I cannot be assured. All things are dark,  
Baffling solution. While the pulse is firm,  
And while the body thrills with fullest life,  
The soul, in such alliance confident,  
Feels strong, indeed, and raises boastful prayers,  
Full of high consecration; but alas!  
When the stout body falters, and its powers  
Melt away one by one, ah, then how soon  
The haughty spirit yields!

*Ni.* Have we not both  
One watchword to preserve us? When we are  
tried

And wish for strength; when we are sad, and  
long

To find sweet comfort; when we contemplate  
Some lofty service, and would be inspired  
To adequate endeavor—then this word  
Will consecrate us wholly: "In her presence!"  
*Phi.* Even that I doubt; for I am weak, indeed;  
And Ena's face is fading fast away  
Out of my vision. Scarcely even now  
Can I recall it from the dimness weird  
Of memory's limbo. Vaguely it appears  
To my most frantic conjurations, weak  
To thrill me and preserve.

*Ni.* At least there's hope  
Of quenching thought with deeds. Would for  
your sake

Varian still were living. You had won  
An easy promotion. Now the essay's more hard,  
Yet not beyond effort. Away with rhyming  
henceforth,

And welcome the world of the real. Come, let us  
plan

To rise in the realm of affairs. Now better far  
Than that dead lion of vague idealism  
Is the living dog of a real, vital purpose,  
Though it utterly fail! [*Exeunt.*]

*VI. Phinon in bed.*

*Phi.* Alas! I waken. Once again, alas!  
The light returns, and with suspicious eye  
Peers into our guilty visages, and asks  
What hideous deed we and the night have  
wrought

Of shame or cruelty. But here awaits  
A still more dread accuser. Ah! too well  
I know this hand. In one respect, at least,  
We two have always differed; for what eye  
Could not distinguish my chirography



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From such as this? Ah! I scarce dare to touch  
it

With these my guilty hands. It seems to look  
With sorrow and reproach.—“My brother dear,  
Sad tidings have I heard, scarce credible  
Of one I honored. Is it, is it, indeed—”

Aha! what's here? Let not the man of pride,  
Even in his secret fancy dare indulge  
In dishabille of morals. There's a hag  
At every keyhole; even the Deity—  
So say divines—is fond of playing spy  
Upon our vices, making them a theme  
Of gossip with his favorites. Which, I wonder,  
Of these inquisitors hath Nirus' ear,  
Omniscience, or some beldame?—“Can it be true  
That such an end is come? And have you thrown  
The treasured nobleness of years away  
Without a pang? Sweet harper, have you left,  
Forever left the high, angelic choir,  
To bear a part in hell's charivari?”—

Yes; I am guilty, guilty. All the trees  
Are pointing at me, and the whispering leaves  
Are hissing:—How they hate me!—See him—

“See, see;

Oh, see him shrink from sunshine! This is he,  
Is he, is he that desecrates our sight,  
That mars with shame our peace and innocence,  
That brings the blights and worms and all the  
pests

That curse the sacred soil!”—“A life like yours,  
So earnestly and eagerly begun,  
Must not be thus abandoned. You were loved;  
Be true to Ena. If you be not true,  
Shall I not win her from you? You will lose  
All right to hold her in your memory,  
(Unless you keep that pure. She is most his

Who is most worthy of her."—Yes, the work  
That all my life's good angels wrought upon  
Must be preserved. A woman's sacred love  
Has consecrated me; the ruined shrine  
Must be restored,—“Oh! I will still be faithful,  
And help you rise even to that dignity  
From which you fell. And when my turn shall  
come,

You must help me; and let us ever pray  
That both fall not at once. You saved my life;  
I owe you my life's service.”—Yes, I will hasten,  
Hasten to Nirus' presence. How I dread  
To see his face! Such strange companion now  
I have with me, 'twill be embarrassing  
To meet the two together. How I wish  
That I were once more innocent, could move  
With step elastic, and could lift my head  
In the old dignity, and feel again  
The lustre on my face, know the old joy  
To meet old friends! I would that I could bear  
The dreadful glance of chastity, the prattle  
Of innocent children, and the recollection  
Of her that loved me. Nirus, 'twas thy teachings  
Set me adrift amid the breakers thus  
Without a pilot. Ah, what dumb despair  
Has made me cast away the blessed years,  
And teach myself to sin, protesting thus  
Against the mockery of my aspiration!  
Unable to attain the infinite,  
I scorned all finite worth. “No more,” said I,  
“Am I to be deluded. From the sun  
All our extremes are blended. How minute  
The parallax of virtue! Good and bad  
Are homogeneous in the final dust.  
Near ever, they are quite identified  
By the arbiter Death.” Indignant threw I off

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The blessed madness of my youth, and strove  
To be more sane, and live in harmony  
With all this chaos. Now I long, alas!  
To build my little Cosmos up again  
Here in the void, with sweet flowers blooming  
round,

Even though they wither and so suddenly  
Shrivel away. Let there be light! My Nirus,  
Nirus, who freed me from authority  
And its crude morals, now shall teach instead  
His own diviner ethics, till henceforth  
I shall be nobler than before I fell: [*Sings.*

O years, I pray you hasten fast,  
And separate me from the past;  
Bear all my sins so far away,  
That they no more shall darken day.

Oh! render so remote their stain  
That its reproach can not remain;  
Let Lethe's cleansing draught be sure,  
To make even memory sweet and pure.

Let me be able yet once more  
To breathe the holy words of yore,  
To pray as at my mother's knee,  
Without the fear of blasphemy.

O years, I pray you hasten fast,  
And separate me from the past;  
Bear all my sins so far away,  
That they no more shall darken day.

VII. *Phinon.*

*Phi.* [*Sings.*

In vain, dear friends, do ye invite  
To join your holiday delight;

For I have sinned; I cannot stay;  
I haste forever on my way.

Dear ones, I know ye love me well,  
And how I love I need not tell;  
But I have sinned; day after day,  
Cain-like I roam a castaway.

O stars, ye offer me release;  
O brooks, ye beckon me to peace;  
In vain, in vain, I cannot stay;  
For I have sinned, I haste away.

Ah! Nirus, thou hast felt it. Shall I, too,  
Become at last thus rythmic in my pain?  
Yes, I will write, not for the merry world,  
But for the souls that suffer; a great cry  
Across the flames to them that share my torture,  
From deep despair and bitter penitence,  
And a dim, tremulous hope, and the piety  
Of a too late dedication; merely a cry  
Of doubt and fear and awful loneliness,  
Fraught with no tearful faith, no meek submis-  
sion,

But only with the moaning, questioning pain  
Of a stricken brother's heart; a social voice  
Of fellow-suffering in this infinite  
Symposium of sorrow; outcries wild  
That cannot be repressed, and yet admit  
Of many a modulation, till the discord  
Fuses in music, till the execrations  
Are softened into prayer. I will not shriek  
With indiscriminate raving; nothing vile  
Shall make its exit from my guarded lips,  
To lower common men beneath themselves,  
By teaching them more hideous blasphemies

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From my intenser nature. I will be  
All beautiful to men, however rent  
In my own private bosom. Ah! that star,  
How radiant and pure! how meek and calm!  
And yet within, what chaos! flames that shoot  
Through planetary spaces, vapor of rock,  
Frenzy of atoms that grapple promiscuous,  
Disdaining heaven's control, and even thus  
Illuminating earth. Not otherwise  
A soul grows luminous. What chaos here!  
What chemic agitation! What *ennui*!  
What sick self-loathing! We can not conceive  
The glory of the aggregate. Within  
All is confusion; but in face and form  
The fiercely generated radiance  
Will gleam forth to ennoble and to bless  
The eyes that look upon us. All these thoughts  
That sting and burn and agonize will serve  
To make us scintillate within the sight  
Of them that see us. Who regards the process,  
Cares for the chemistry? We seek results;  
Results alone are real; processes  
Annul themselves, perpetually destroyed  
Into results. This life must be renewed,  
This radiance replenished; so cease not  
The generating forces; still go on  
The mighty ebullitions. Yet those means  
Belong not to the present; they are past  
And primitive, immeasurably remote  
From these resulting glories. All that heat  
Is light to men that see us. What reproach  
In the fierce conflagration? The vast space  
Will temper it, diffuse it softly forth  
In tranquil glory to all waiting souls  
Within its globe of light. Ah! when the sun  
Ceases to glow, its rays still journey on

From world to world, weaving an aureole  
For every saintly brow. Forevermore,  
Remoter and remoter pierce those rays,  
Fainter and fainter, yet not ever lost,  
Although that sun hangs icy in the void,  
Oblivious of past heavings. Grandest age  
Of a star's history, when, consumed at last,  
No more material, it still gleams in space  
A sacred spirit world! Even such a fate  
I pray for for myself. Grand consummation  
Whene'er the man of thought has borne away  
Into the tomb his vanities and sins,  
All his diseases, all his petulance,  
When his decay is done, and even his tomb  
Obliterated, nothing of him left  
Except his noblest thoughts! Then has he grown  
To be a spirit, then is fit at last  
For apotheosis. Hasten the day  
When I shall be destroyed, all but my thought,  
Freed from all sense-corruption. And that  
thought,  
Oh! it shall blaze forever; 'tis my due  
As recompense for pain. When nature blunders  
And makes a piteous monstrosity,  
She undertakes in horror and remorse  
To compensate with some peculiar gift  
That happier men know not. O sire of song,  
Death to the weakling thought! Now prove thee,  
Phinon,  
A Spartan parent. Strangle the commonplace,  
Ere it look on the light of day. At last, at last  
Our age hath found its voice!

*VIII. Phinon.*

*Phi.* Angels and devils, now I bid you all  
To be spectators of a tragedy

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Without a precedent. This manuscript,  
My soul's expression, the rich condensation  
Of all a deep experience, I commit  
To this devouring flame. How recently—  
Some yesterdays gone—'twas not! tomorrow  
again

It will not be; today with nerve and sinew  
And virile glory it standeth symmetric, complete,  
Unknown to the world, like a mighty soul that  
passeth

Through life incognito, silent and self-contained,  
While dwarflings bluster and brawl. No human  
eye

Shall look upon these pages. I reject  
The mockery of fame, blot out forever  
The glory of my thoughts, which put to shame  
A groveling life. I will not suffer men  
To find me out, and so, when I am dead,  
To gather round and shout into my ear,  
And keep me from repose. Ah! I do wish  
I were no more, that all whose memory  
Holds any trace of me might pass away;  
Yea, that the earth my erring feet have trod  
Might be destroyed. Then only could I rest,  
Dreaming a long, unconscious dream of peace.  
Such rest I must await, but even now  
Can stupefy myself and walk benumbed.  
Dazed into partial calm. O passionate thought,  
Bodied in flaming words, I give you now  
A long quietus. Thus myself I slay,  
And plunge back toward the chaos whence I  
came.

The dagger-thrust will be less violent  
Than this great suicide.

## ACT THIRD.

*I. Nirus, Cotaminus.*

*Co.* Into her dangerous coils  
Daily she draws him closer. Not a hand  
Will you lift in rescue?

*Ni.* I'm not yet convinced  
I'd dread such coils myself.

*Co.* Shall the earnest Victor  
Be bound to a giddy coquette?

*Ni.* Such often prove  
The rarest of wives, when all that energy  
No more runs waste in folly, but, directed  
Into the bosom of one happy man,  
Yields its superfluous floods to multiply  
The volume of his life.

*Co.* Then be it so.  
Still deeper the reason that you interfere  
To hinder this advantage of a rival  
Strong enough, even unmated.

*Ni.* You advance  
Two counter motives—which sincere? Your  
credit

For sagacity's now at stake.

*Co.* We oft must feel  
Around the truth with words, before we know  
Our own true motive. Now I find the second  
Nearer my heart. Let Victor be augmented  
With this new vital force,—you may retire  
Again to your farm.

*Ni.* Truly your foresight's virile  
Far beyond nature; but I fear your conscience  
Has missed its puberty.

*Co.* I'm no moral eunuch,  
Without a conscience: I've but mastered that  
With my other passions. You yourself methinks



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Would be a rare success, once gain control  
Of that imperious conscience. Here I worst you,  
Should we be rivals. You have no less foresight  
Than I myself, were not your foresight hampered  
With the incubus of a conscience.

*Ni.* Mine the advantage,  
Should we two sit in conclave, and our  
foresights  
Should prove at variance; for my conscience  
then

Would double my vote.

*Co.* If your wit should prove a  
third,

I were overwhelmed with odds.

*Ni.* Be we allies.  
You re-enforce my judgment, I your conscience,  
We'll make a pair.

*Co.* Ah! you're unscrupulous  
Like other men of overweening conscience:  
You outwit my shrewdness, make it serve  
as lackey

To your ideal ends.—We two together  
May rule some empire yet. [*Exeunt, with arms  
thrown over each other's shoulders.*]

### II. *Mira.*

*Mi.* How can I hope that he will think to love  
me

If none suggest it to him? and if I—  
If I durst tell him boldly of my love,  
He would still more despise: for he is stern  
Concerning woman's place; he thinks that we  
Should never love,—only let men love us,  
If they chance to think about us.—He prefers  
The words of Nirus to the infinite treasures  
Of a woman's living heart. Alas! what fate

Awaiteth Mira? Shall she, meteor-like,  
 In Victor's atmosphere be all consumed,  
 While Nirus argues on? or shall she fall  
 In Victor's arms and be of him a part?  
 Would in those arms I might forever tremble;  
 Yea, tremble in his glorious hero-arms,  
 Veined with the sacred blood of royalty,—  
 Close-clinging there for refuge from the dread  
 Of his own god-like presence. O my love!  
 O Victor, love, like that celestial star  
 Enshrined within the bosom of the lake  
 Be thou to me! I cannot rise to thee;  
 But thou canst drop from thine exalted sphere  
 The radiance of thy beauty unto me,  
 Adorning me and making me akin  
 To the high heavens.—Alas! these weird  
     magicians,  
 These burly monsters, how do they enchant us,  
 And draw us tremulous to their rugged  
     bosoms,  
 Although we blanch with terror! Ah! ah me!  
 How tender-passionate to them do we come,  
 And quivering sink with sobbing earnestness  
 Down finally in their terrific arms,  
 And passive-eager lie there all our lives!  
 Though they were flame to scorch us into ashes,  
 What woman's heart would hesitate?—Poor  
     Victor!  
 I know he's lonely: would he'd find his home  
 Here in my loyal bosom,—how much better  
 Than arguing with Nirus! Ha! who comes?—  
 Cotaminus and Victor! They converse.  
 'Tis said whene'er men meet among themselves  
 They speak of us lightly. Well, we'll see right  
     now  
 What these chevaliers will say. [*Hides herself.*

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*Cotaminus and Victor enter.*

*Co.* Mere empty show!

*Vic.* Yet beauty's the temple where we bow to  
truth,

And look on the shadow of God. She is a flower,  
To be revered for flawless loveliness,  
Even though the soul be lacking.

*Co.* I suppose

There are some plants for human sustenance;  
And there are others to delight the eye.  
She toileth not and neither doth she spin;  
She speaks no wisdom, is not even good:  
And yet she is a goodly parable,  
Wherewith my friend may teach the vanity  
Of human duty and nobility  
That toils in pain to elevate mankind,  
And has no time for flirting. One would think  
That Nirus had injected in your ears  
His moral aesthetics.

*Vic.* Though she seems to lack  
The higher qualities, her loveliness  
Serves her instead, and wakes in all beholders  
Feelings devout with which herself, perchance,  
May ne'er have been familiar. Would, indeed,  
That honor might be kept for nobler women,—  
For women such as earnest men can wed  
And hold in perfect reverence. If mere pleasure,  
If empty pleasure wear such peerless beauty,  
How duty, truth and love should be arrayed  
In radiance celestial!

*Co.* Is it not strange

That she is able to continue thus  
In constant affectation, never caught  
A moment off her guard? Were she to sleep,  
And talk in dreams, I wonder if she then  
Would use her natural tones.

*Vic.* She has more faults  
Than other women ; yet she has as well  
More qualities than they. I've found the traces  
Of even a soul : I've watched within her eyes,  
At intervals in gayety and folly,  
A heaven-reminding light that seemed to seek  
Its proper place upon her countenance ;  
Yet ruthlessly she thrust that light aside,  
As if ashamed lest men should be reminded  
Of the spirit 'neath her flesh. How long, alas !  
How long will that sweet angel still return  
To be insulted thus ? Will it not leave,  
And be content to find a lowlier home  
And a more gracious welcome ?—Ah ! to win  
The deep and unfeigned love of such a woman  
Such love as glistens in religious tears,  
And makes all vanity and all coquetry  
Drop mask-like from the long disfigured nature,  
Till it stands forth undisguised, simple as a  
flower,  
Humble with adoration, tremulous  
With drooping diffidence,—Ah ! such a hope  
Might lure adventure.

*Co.* Will our Samson woo  
This modern scissors-wielder ?

*Vic.* Fear me not.  
I were contented with a humbler triumph,—  
To bring her for her own ennoblement  
To that sweet agitation at the thought  
Of God and duty,—finding thus at last  
Her woman's soul alive and sensitive,  
Even as her heart, no less accessible.

*Co.* My friend, you are inspired. Continue still  
While in the spirit. Tell what you would say  
Were she now here before you.

*Vic.* I would say :

"There is a reason why thou shouldst not be Earnest as others,—seeing not this face, Only its dulled reflection. We behold Day after day, augmenting in our souls The glory of thy presence, by the virtue Of thine own perfect gifts surpassing thee In inner qualities."

*Co.* Most subtly reasoned! Shrewd is the diagnosis. Now in turn Prescribe the remedy. If she were here, What treatment would you order?

*Vic.* I would bid her Select some quiet hour when shines the sun And beams upon her with its fullest light, That she may but a little nearer know How she would shine if shadows of the earth Did not conceal, detracting from her beauty, Just as the mirror must detract again, Unwillingly remiss, whose sweet religion Is but to reproduce her loveliness, Giving it back to make her lovelier still With such a precious vision,—pure-faced glass, Her beauties' armature, renewing them With their own inspiration. I would say: "Choose such an hour to find out what thou art, Searching the lines of that neglected face,— Neglected surely, since unheeded so— And find an oracle for thee, at once Prophecy and command; and gazing thus, See thou if thou canst solve the mystery That makes thee sometimes yearn up at the sky So eagerly, as if thou wouldst behold Through some bright opening left by falling stars.

Yield to that weird and solemn wonderment, Looking awhile upon no earthly sight,

But only on that fragment of sweet heaven,  
Given to inspire thee. Learn but perfectly  
That thou art beautiful, and on that day  
This lowly earth will gain a sacredness,  
O beauteous Mira, to translate us all."

*[Mira is discovered.]*

*Mi.* I have another folly to confess,—  
Not to repent; for profit has resulted  
That justifies the risk: here in the vines  
I hid myself with curiosity  
To hear what you would say when by yourselves,  
And under no constraint. The benefit  
That I receive may serve me for excuse.

*Vi.* Pardon me, Mira, that familiar freedom  
With which I spoke. Who but is passing bold  
'Mid hypothetic terrors, till at last  
The majestical reality encountered  
Sets him to stammering thus? Can you remem-  
ber

Aught I have said that did not do you honor?

*Mi.* What I have heard has made me under-  
stand

That you have honored me more worthily  
Than I myself. I did not know before  
The earnestness of men, or I had tried  
To be deserving of their reverence  
And elevated friendship. Time I've lost;  
But even yet will I become your equal,  
Rival perchance. Farewell! my friends. I go  
To say my prayers. Hereafter I'll be good,  
Be very good, and yet be merry, too. *[Exit.]*  
*Co.* It may be true that you have found at once  
Both heart and soul in Mira; yet you see  
She does not droop or tremble. If at last  
She does adore, she is not greatly humble.  
If vanity depart, and all coquetry,

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And native truth become her sole adornment,  
She will stand erect, and her unwavering eyes  
Will triumph o'er you.

*Vic.* Yes, when she attains  
Her destined dignity, she will not be  
A quavering pilgrim doing penances,  
But an archangel, strong as beautiful,  
Glad in the health of perfect spiritual life.

[*Exit Cotaminus.*]

What do I wish for thee?—the rack of torture,  
A couch of flame beside the dying Lord,  
So great an anguish as to drive away  
All desecrating laughs, and to clear  
Thy purer forehead,—cloudless firmament  
Of intellectual womanhood. O pain,  
Come thou to her and give thy ministries  
To make her earnest; come such agonies  
As sweep away all lighter qualities,  
And leave alone the inherent majesty,  
To make of her a spirit, burning up  
All but her womanhood.

*Mira re-enters.*

*Mi.* Victor, my friend,  
You thought me trivial: was such languor, then,  
About my vanities that you supposed them  
To be but emptiness? Whate'er I seemed,—  
Trivial, doubtless, did you not discern,  
From all the tenseness even in my folly,  
That I was animated by emotions  
Deep enough to be worthy of a soul?  
Your eyes have been as far from seeing me  
As from beholding yonder distant star,  
Which quivers on its flame-rack, yet appears,  
Seen so remote, to dance the hours away,  
An unsubstantial ignis-fatuus  
Amid the waste of cloud.

*Vic.* 'Tis, true, indeed;

I should have known that such a countenance,  
So full of beauty and expressiveness,  
Was molded in the flames. And yet I wish  
That I might see a little of the terror,  
Not kept so distant from your truest self,  
That all your grandeur dims to pettiness,  
Lost in incredible space. Mira, my friend,  
Be oftener, then, sublime as even to-night,  
In earnestness like this.

*Mi.* Ah! hence it is

That I am overwhelmed whene'er we meet,  
And you unmoved. You assume no veiling  
cloud

Of mockery and jesting gayety  
To hide your nature, but sincere you stand,  
Without disguise, to overawe the world.  
I would that I could disentangle me  
From such investments, and appear to you  
As you to me.—Alas, alas! I fear  
I betray myself.

*Vic.* Ah; I prefer, indeed

The old disguises. Nay, my sister dear,  
My soul is full of honoring chivalry,  
And full of understanding, too. I know  
The power of deep emotion. I revere  
Weakness as well as strength; and I will make  
A shrine within my memory for this day,  
And cherish it with reverent sympathy.  
Have not a fear but you can trust your honor  
Within my presence or upon my lips  
Or in my daily memory. I am sure  
Your guardian angel had not left you thus,  
Had it not been that chancing here with me,  
You had no need of her protecting care.



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*Mi.* You are not more startled, Victor, by my rashness

Than I myself. Yet even my shame is tempered  
With a sacred pride. I know that I have erred,  
And uninvited tried to crowd myself

Within the sanctuary; yet I swear  
Mine was true worship, not a profanation.

*Vic.* Mira, farewell; I honor you the more  
For this day's revelation: you have proved  
Your nature's earnestness.

*Mi.* I thank thee, Victor. [*Exit.*

*Vic.* Why should I, too, not love, and have my life

Rendered profound in that religion? Why  
Should not my brow, too, wear the aureole?  
If other men have dared accept that crown,  
Why should not I? Am I not worthy, too?  
We never find a rank above our worth;  
Wherever we are placed, howe'er exalted,  
We feel ourselves at ease,—we wear the purple  
Like true-born princes. I will not now shrink  
From this permitted glory.

*Nirus enters.*

Tell me, Nirus,  
Would I show my folly, if I sought the hand  
Of Mira, the coquette?

*Ni.* 'Tis said all lovers  
Must needs betray their follies.

*Vic.* But I meant  
Would I show mine in the seeking?

*Ni.* You will show  
Somebody's folly in the seeking not  
Of a hand so peerless.

*Vic.* Nirus, you're the adviser  
I long have sought, anticipating thus  
My own decision.

*III. Victor and Mira.*

*Mi.* Ah! Victor, can I ever extricate me  
From this habitual levity? So long  
I have affected it that scarcely now  
I could keep it from my prayers. Even yesterday,

While your reproaches rankled in my bosom,  
The humor took me, and my words were turned  
To mockery of my feelings. I came back  
Resolute not to nerve myself again  
With aught of jesting. But the truth I found  
Too great for lips to utter; and thus came  
An act undignified.—Oh! you shall see  
That I can fix my gaze as loftily  
As you yourself do.—But is this the way  
For recent penitence? Should eyes be red,  
Hands wrung, and garments rent? I am a child,  
A naughty child, and right away forget  
That I am in disgrace.

*Vic.* Like Phaethon  
Have you wrecked some planet, that you seek in  
vain

An adequate penance?—Even as dreams of love  
That gladden weary years—

*Mi.* A perilous theme  
For priestly lips to venture.

*Vic.* Like bright love-hopes  
Should be our upward yearnings,—solace and joy  
And prophecy divine, needing no aid  
Of austere conscience.

*Mi.* Gentle monitor,  
And therefore potent! If my soul's now saved  
Let us go back and join the social games.

*Vic.* Wait, Mira! feel you not the night around,  
In its solemn beauty? This is a spirit world  
Whose soul appears projected to our eyes,

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As when a maiden smiles. Is not this hour  
A proper birth-time for our mutual love,—  
For our two souls to start those tender hymnings  
That ever grow more sweetly passionate,  
Until at last they burst in symphonies  
Of marriage-rapture? Let this hour not pass  
Until consummate with the utterance  
Of our hearts' unsounded deeps. Mira, my  
love!

Mi. What! my confessor, makes he love to  
Mira,

To mock his sacred calling?

Vic. Doth Mira still  
Continue mocking, mocking her own heart's  
glory?

Mocking my love? Making a jest of me?  
Then I must leave; for I am serious,  
And brook no levity.—The stars of heaven,  
The stars are earnest: I'll commune with  
them. [*Exit.*]

Mi. O, Victor, Victor! Victor, pray return;  
Leave me not thus.

*Victor re-enters.*

Vic. Did Mira call?

Mi. If Victor  
Kindly will now repeat his recent words,  
Mira will strive to hear attentively  
And give them serious answer.

Vic. I am sorry  
Your memory fails you; for my own, indeed,  
Is no less treacherous. What, pray, have I  
spoken

Worthy of repetition?

Mi. Mocks Victor, too?  
If he can not be lured, then, to repeat  
Those eloquent words, I must remain content

**Mi.** Touch me not

*Vic.* Why tease me thus? Dearest, I choose but  
thee  
From all the world. What though I have not  
seen

All women on the earth? Not many souls  
I have met here, yet feel I none the less  
I chose thee out of all; for at the first  
Did I not choose this age? and why that choice  
But that thou livedst then? Did I not choose  
From all the universe this little earth,  
Where thou wast newly-born? Why did I  
choose

This kingdom and this village? Why, indeed,  
Save that thou drew'st me hither and I longed  
To be with thee? I waited one more summons;  
Why wast thou silent?

*Mi.* Yesterday I spoke:  
You sent me forth in shame, with cheek of flame,  
Whipped from your presence.

*Vic.* 'Tis my own turn, Mira,  
To feel the red shame mounting to my brow;  
I chose, you know, to be deliberate.  
I'm coy no more.

*Mi.* Stand back, sir: I prefer  
The old disguises.—Victor, do not blush;  
My soul is chivalrous, and I revere  
Weakness as well as strength. I scorn you not,  
But keep a shrine in memory for this day  
Forevermore. Your honor's safe with me:  
I'll take your guardian angel's place awhile,  
Till his vacation's over.

*Vic.* Mira, Mira,  
I cannot bear your laughter. Will you drive me  
Forever from your presence?

*Mi.* Who, I wonder,  
Will be the benefactor,—you or I,

When our cheeks touch each other?

*Vic.*

I care not

To approach you nearer.

*Mi.*

Ah! who started first?

*Vic.* Now, now, we're conquered both—your  
presence gives me

Utter simplicity, till I could romp

With boyish glee, or play at childish games

Without the loss of dignity. The world

Has been reduced from painful complications,

Till all is homogeneous. All things now

Seem right at last. I have no preference,

No care to make selection of my words

Or of my actions. Whatsoe'er comes first.

Appears the best. The commonplace is rife

With all transcendant meanings. Every word

Is of the spirit. Though things vain we utter,

They still convey, like tongues of Pentecost,

Significance ethereal.

*Mi.*

I loved first;

I was the first to tell you of my love.

My love is not a secondary passion

Casting its faint reflection. To your ardor

I yield not passively a heart inert,

But bound to meet you, equal in the tryst,

No less aggressive.

*Vic.*

Every rapturous breath

Shows more your depth and power, daughter  
true

- Of this dear earth, and therefore truer child

Of the universe and God; co-ordinate,

Coeval with creation.

*Mi.*

I am earth's child,—

"Of the earth, earthy."

*Vic.*

Earth is beautiful

And I am glad to live here.

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*Mi.* Isn't this better  
Than talking with Nirus till in sympathy  
E'en the jaws of the donkeys ached?

*Vic.* I only sought  
His soul's salvation.

*Mi.* Yet in vain you sought it,  
Haply at your soul's peril.

*Cotaminus enters; offers to withdraw.*

Ha! the judge!

*Co.* Victor, the Gorgons are not terribler  
Than are the Graces. We, your friends, knew  
not

Your deadly peril, but have chatted on,  
The while this fairy charmed. I seek you two  
On behalf of our friends. I know 'tis wearisome  
To endure the vainness of society,  
Its tedious jestings and its compliments,  
Its stealthy kisses in dark entrances,  
And all the ambiguous levities of speech  
That foolish lovers deem sufficient quite  
To conceal the courtship. If you stole away.  
Wishing to shun such cloying spectacles,  
I do not blame you; but we have at last  
Some better entertainment, which I know  
You would not like to miss. I came to find  
you,

Thinking that I must seek you separately;  
But luckily you happen now to meet  
As I arrive. How fortunate for me  
That I should reach you ere you pass each  
other,—

Finding thus two as one! If you can bear  
Each other's and our company awhile,  
Let me entreat you come; especially  
's our fair merry-Andrew, I perceive,  
Has lately been in tears. 'Tis probable

That she has launched a jest at Victor's pate,  
And failed to make him smile.

*Mi* Cotaminus,

The grave, the stern,—can even he relax  
And stoop to jesting? Such a contradiction  
Put in a book would drive the critics frantic,  
And ruin the author. Victor presently  
Will undertake a pun. And yet, good sir,  
Your very mirth is grim; 'tis vinegar,  
Not wine. You are not highly qualified  
To wear the motley. You would shake your  
bells

Too fiercely far to please.—Still there are lives  
Grave as your own that are grim jokes through-  
out

For devils' laughter: kings that raise themselves  
From coronation-day solemnities,  
And then betray their country; priests whose  
brows,

Pressed by the miter, have acquired their  
wrinkles

Chiefly by plotting mischief; worshipers  
That in the closet bend a reverent knee  
To him that sees in secret, and again  
A knee as reverent publicly to Mammon;  
Bridegrooms that wear a serious countenance  
Upon the wedding-eve, yet all their lives  
Are wholly virgin from the sanctities  
Enveloping true love. A sober face  
That hides a heart unconsecrate,—that face  
Is nature's bitterest jest. 'Tis better far  
To be the zany with a human heart  
And treasury of tears. I would not act  
The solemn ape, and am not bold enough  
To hope to wear such earnest countenance  
As Michael or Victor.



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*Co.* Do you wish  
To return with me?

*Mi.* Indeed I much prefer  
To stay alone with Victor and escape  
You and the rest.

*Vic.* Come Mira!

*Mi.* Yes, we'll go:  
We can be together often when intruders  
Are barred by lock and key.

*Co.* Mira, I fear  
You will cease now to love society.

*Mi.* I hate it not, and I shall love it still  
If I can find it henceforth what I hope,  
A theater of action for the heart's  
And for the spirit's powers. Yet solitude  
Renews the force society exhausts,  
And makes us trulier social. Hence, you see.  
To fit our spirits for society  
We need much solitude. Cotaminus,  
You know 'tis but the silence of man's thought  
That turns all wheels. Action can only place  
And execute whatever thought contrives.  
Society distributes what is wrought  
In lonely meditation. Hitherto  
My contributions to the social store  
Have been but childish trinkets. In the future  
I think that I shall give less frequently,  
But give more earnestly; I will toil now  
Through lonely days to render worthier  
My contributions.

*Co.* If our friends but knew  
What a missionary now is drawing near,  
How it would set them gasping! Fairest lady,  
What has excited so your gentle brain,  
To render it thus active? Certainly  
Some memorable occurrence that avails

To start you thinking!

*Mi.* Yes, the novel sight  
Of blindfold Justice suddenly transformed  
To a prying gossip.

*Nirus and Singers enter.*

*Co.* Our entertainers deign,  
Meeting us, to economize our quest.  
Some of his recent songs has Nirus promised,  
Kept virgin for our ears.

*Ni.* Mira and Victor!  
Well-met, indeed!

*Co.* Who'll solve the mystery  
Why Mira here and Victor, she no soldier,  
He no coquette, should find themselves at last  
Congenial thus?

*Mi.* And may one ne'er admire  
Gifts differing from one's own? How else should

*Nirus,*  
Not being himself a villain, yet revere  
Another's roguery, as appeareth well  
In some of his friendships?

*Ni.* Mira, though no soldier  
Can deal terrific blows. Let's all cry truce  
Before some other innocent bystander  
Receives a broken head.

*Song.*

Choose well your friends;  
Be circumspect;  
Menacing that e'er impends,  
Misery that never ends  
Must ensue, if you neglect  
Warning thus direct.  
Choose well your friends.

Choose well your friends;  
Be wary, pray;

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Who unfittingly commends,  
When his wealth of love he lends,  
When he binds himself for aye,  
Hurls all hope away.  
Choose well your friends.

Choose well your friends ;  
Use all your arts ;  
If the king misapprehends  
Whate'er tokens nature sends  
For detecting human hearts,  
Empire departs.  
Choose well your friends.

Choose well your friend,  
When love you seek ;  
Ruin surely will attend,  
Heaven itself can ill defend  
From the viper coiling meek  
Close against your cheek.  
Choose well your friend.

Watch well your friend ;  
He'll soon conspire,  
Thwarting every noble end,  
Till the good that you intend,  
And the virtue you desire  
Turn out mischief dire.  
Watch well your friend.

Watch well your friend ;  
He seeks your death,  
Ever plotting how to send  
Misery you cannot mend,  
Sucking out your sleeping breath,  
Thus he tarrieth.

Watch well your friend.

*Co.* Which of us, Victor,  
Think you the poet hits?

*Mi.* Ill-omened song!  
And not like Nirus.

*Ni.* You are a sorceress,  
And soon detect me. 'Twas Cotaminus  
Gave the idea, and desired the song  
For his own pleasure; since Cotaminus,  
With all his reverend soberness, must cherish  
One harmless affectation, fondly nursing  
A mild misanthropy, which only adds  
Vivacity desirable in one  
Else over-solemn,—one friend, by the way,  
Not to be watched.

*Mi.* Not for his beauty, surely.—  
But Nirus, no more raven-croaking, pray,  
To mar our mirth. Give us a better song,  
After your heart—and mine.

*Co.* Heart-unison!  
How flattering to Nirus!

*Mi.* And to you,  
Having, perchance, my admiration doubled  
With Nirus's.

*Ni.* What song is set down next?

*1st Singer.* *O'er One That Repenteth.*

*Co.* Capital, indeed!  
Since Mira is a penitent today.

*Mi.* For wasting time on tumbling harlequins  
So long without a protest.

*Song.*

Ah! if they ever drive away  
Each friend that loveth thee,  
Thou'lt keep no friend beyond a day,  
Bereft continually.

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Hearts cannot choose but love thee, dear;  
For thou art worthiest;  
If they be noble, 'twill appear  
A duty manifest.

Reproach upon my conscience weighed,  
Meeting thy spirit-eye,  
So long a time as I delayed  
That consecration high;

And then when I began to love,  
And made my final choice,  
Ah! there was joy in heaven above,  
One rapturous, ringing voice.

*Mi.* Sing a song now  
To make us weep.

*Ni.* I cannot make you weep;  
I'll make you sigh.

*Co.* These ladies can yield you tears,  
At trifling cost. Some weep as the prince takes  
snuff

For the titillation; others half dissolve  
O'er a cat's romance, to excuse the recurring  
flood

That springs from their own flirtations.

*Mi.* Others outvie  
Niagara or the geysers from pure mirth  
O'er No-longer-young's herculean attempts  
At social vivacity.

*Song.*

Ah! art thou sorry? dost thou pity, dear,  
That I must suffer thus for thy sweet sake?  
Nay, pity not, my friend; withhold thy tear.  
Let us rejoice, although my heart do break.

Know that I would not give this suffering  
For all the treasures of the Indian store;  
It maketh me, my love, to be a king,  
Sitting among the martyr-souls of yore.

One only treasure, dear, did once suffice  
To buy from me one moment of my grief,  
The tender beaming of thy pitying eyes,  
When thee I passed, and caught that solace brief.

Each moment hath from thee a blessing sure;  
Within thy presence holy peace doth reign;  
And in thy absence no less sweet and pure  
Cometh the chastening of this holy pain.

Co. O listen to counsel, Nirus,  
And try to utilize your fine ideals  
By printing a book to swell your bank-account.  
Few realize ideals; many a bright one  
Has realized upon them. That I call  
The ideal made practical.

*IV. Victor. Mira enters.*

*Mi.* Why come you off here, Victor, by yourself.

And sit thus gloomy? Only one short hour,  
And I shall be your wife! Is it not a dream?

*Vic.* Mira, 'tis real! Heaven help us! Life  
Grows too stupendous. I am more and more  
Involved in life, until I shrink away  
In dread and in despair. Earth and the grave,  
And duty and the judgment-day. O God,  
Prepare us for them!

**Mi.** Why has love been given,  
Except to make life's terror bearable  
With that sweet presence? Victor, recently

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I have been eavesdropper to clandestine sighs  
That widow Mira. Is this love, indeed,  
So ineffective?

*Vic.* Oh! love's not a joy;  
Love is a light to guide us on our way,  
The same way as before; a sacredness  
To dignify our natural disposition,  
And make our gladness or our sadness sweeter;  
A melody that mingles with our lives  
To make them rhythmic. And we both must  
find

It may accompany the woofulest notes  
That Nature's finger e'er hath learned to sound.  
I am content that now the harmony  
Is sweeping through me. Life henceforth for  
me

Will never be discordant. Henceforth, dear,  
The hymning cannot cease.

*Nirus, Cotaminus and Friends enter.*

*Co.* You're solemn  
Than one bereft.

*Vic.* Ah! I am not the man  
For such occasions. Some one else, I fear,  
Should be here in my stead.

*2nd Friend.* Ungracious youth!  
He'll always be a bachelor, though blessed  
With as many wives as a Mormon.

*Ni. [to Victor.]* We understand,  
And honor your earnest nature. Wait we, friends,  
Upon their leisure. [*Exit, accompanied by several.*]

*Mi.* I like your melancholy.  
I would not have you love me merrily.  
Our gayety and pensiveness combined  
Will fuse into a common mood for both  
Of cheerful gravity. My gentle friends,

I beg your patience. Soon we will return,  
And be more sociable.

*Co.* I ne'er from choice  
Intrude on family brawls.

*Mi.* Lest you interrupt them,  
And thwart your mission.

*Co.* Farewell! and my good wishes  
Remain with you to season your arguments!

*Mi.* Let mine accompany you, nor ever linger  
This side the Antipodes. [*Exeunt all but Mira  
and Victor.*]

In other ages,  
In far-off worlds, shall we not still recall  
With grateful memory this little earth  
Where we have grown acquainted, and this  
grove,

And the cool spring, our earliest trysting-place,  
When first we found out that our future lives  
Should be together? Ah! no place so sweet,  
But thought of these will sweeten it the more;  
No beauty that our spirits shall attain  
Can dull the memory of the eager light  
That glistened in each other's fervent eyes  
Here on the earth, where we are in the body,  
Each in a separate cell—yet even thus  
Cannot be kept asunder. I am sure  
That we shall not forget our lowly earth,  
Nor ever lose each other. I believe  
That lovers are to spend eternity  
Within each other's arms.

*Vic.* I cannot think  
About eternity. Even time suffices  
To make me stagger. Ah! it seems today  
That I can care for common work no more.  
I wish no other occupation henceforth  
But converse with thee, Mira.



**Mi.** Pray, think not  
You'll grow effeminate now. The blood of kings  
Circulates in your veins. Never before  
You labored so ambitiously as now,  
With me to urge. We'll have our holiday  
To mark this era; then our work begins,  
But work together that shall seem like play.  
Together as we bend o'er noble books  
In high communion, studies most abstruse  
Will then abound in charms. The studious  
frown

Will alternate in variation rich  
With looks of love, our faces to refine  
With that experience deep. I'll not intrude;  
But if thou turn away thine eyes from me,  
To look upon the heavens, mine own eyes, too,  
Shall gaze wherever thou dost indicate,  
Ceasing to watch thee. Be thou studious,  
In sympathy unfailing will I join thee,  
Even to indifference of thy very presence,  
As simply as a child that ne'er hath known  
The sweet pain and the madness of dear love.  
*Vic.* How noble, Mira, shall I be henceforth,  
Having thy life-long presence to exalt me!

Mi. And I—I have no character; I wait—  
Some women do—for love to give me form.  
In sacred passion at thy feet I lie,  
Amorphous, neither good nor bad, all void,  
Until thy spirit move upon the deep,  
And rearrange my atoms. Such a one lies  
A bright, insipid shape, till man appears  
To vitalize her life, and day by day  
To mould her yielding substance in his arms  
To his own semblance. Now am I to be  
No longer void of attributes; henceforth  
Profound and thoughtful, animate at last

With living breath of thy dear lips, I stand  
No more a thing of vanity and folly.

*V. Mira and Cotamina.*

*Co.* Thou hast attained the fullness of thy life,  
High now above my level. Methinks already  
Thou art transformed, subdued and lowly now  
With thy burden of joy. Oh! open but thy lips,  
And some sweet song of love will surely flow  
To soothe my heart's unrest. Lay but thy hand,  
Fresh from the altar's light, on my wreathless  
brow,

And let me feel that virtue. Tell thy thoughts,  
Thy new divine emotions. Let me feel,  
In sympathy with thee, what otherwise  
Must be from me withheld. Ah! Mira, dear,  
The woman unto whom no vows are paid,  
Who lives alone unworshipped, like a Madonna  
Kept from her empery of intercession,  
Dwelling apart unreverenced—is she not  
Forsaken quite?

*Mi.* Nay, spirits honor her  
That men neglect. Angels of heaven descend  
And gather round, exchanging ministries  
With that deserted woman, till no more  
She cares for men's devotion.

*Co.* Ah! the angels  
Are not my comrades. Merely the crumbs that  
fall

From your human feast will satisfy my hunger  
Far more than their ambrosia. Tell me, Mira,  
The wonders of thy state.

*Mi.* What can I say  
In common language of a life like this  
Transcending speech divine? You can but wait  
And learn it in the brightening of my eyes,

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And in my deepening nature. We can tell  
Single events and details; can we speak  
Life's very self? Have I not left behind  
My fragmentary life, the broken life,  
Which days and seasons interrupt, and things  
Intrude upon and mar? My life at length  
Has grown a unity; and single things  
Have lost all meaning, are completely fused  
In their divine significance. My life  
Has now combined its separate hues in one,  
And radiates henceforth in perfect white.  
How can I tell you; time for me has ceased;  
And who can speak eternity?

*Co.* Ah, Mira!  
You are blessed in Victor's love.

*Mi.* How kind in Victor  
To care for me, this pensioner on his love,  
This poor, new-rescued waif of vanity!

*Co.* Now shall I tell you what my father said  
About you, Mira?

*Mi.* I have already heard  
Some bitter words that he saw fit to utter.

*Co.* You were misinformed; he honors you.  
Even I

Dreamed not that you possessed such qualities  
As he attributes to you. He told mother  
That Mira's genius does not rank beneath  
Victor's himself; that all which Victor lacked  
To render him a rival formidable

Among the candidates for power and fame  
He had attained in Mira. A Nirus comes  
But once in centuries, born self-complete,  
Fitted for all attainment. Many a Nirus  
Is born and dies before a Victor rises.

Thus fortunate to consummate himself  
With such miraculous marriage, gaining a force

Beyond one soul's achieving. Nirus evinces  
The natural union stable and inert,  
Whose elements in Victor free and active,  
Incessantly combining with the strength  
Of chemic passion, will impel his being  
Sublimely with that glorious energy  
To all attainment. Unto Mira then  
Victor must look for all his future greatness.  
*Mi.* Such words from none could gratify me  
more

Than from Cotaminus.

*Co.* And yet he added  
That you yourself were of all womankind  
Most incomplete; and only as a part  
Of Victor's life could your life ever gain  
Sobriety or worth. You owed to Victor  
Far more than he to you.

*Mi.* Why this, my friend,  
This very qualification of the praise,  
Renders the praise more welcome, placing thus  
Victor so far above me, and besides  
Quite reconciling this excessive praise  
With certain harsher words.

#### ACT FOURTH.

##### *I. Nirus and an Officer.*

*Ni.* I've set the torch at last. The righteous  
flame  
Is kindled round the world, not to abate  
Till the throne's ablaze. Our tyrant Castux seeks  
To win the co-operation of our silence  
By leaving unmolested all our doubts,  
While torturing the peasants. 'Twas from us  
Their doubts had origin. We strewed the seeds  
Of such a deadly growth. Let us not now

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Leave to their fate our lowly proselytes,  
Though there were none but you and me alone  
To join in the fierce defiance. Let us two  
Protest and die protesting.

*Of.* Others, sir,

In your position love the people less,  
And willingly permit the savage rites,  
If but themselves may have immunity  
And their old luxurious ease.

*Ni.* A messenger!

*Messenger enters.*

*Mes.* Good news, at last! but in a bloody garb,  
As good news ever comes in time of war;  
A priest, the mortal enemy of Mons,  
Made prophecy in hearing of the king  
That Mons would yet dethrone the sovereign  
And bring about his death. The king forthwith  
Brought Mons to death on charge of heresy;  
And now the nobles rise to join the people.  
*Ni.* This is most welcome news. In time of war  
Such news must be so greeted.

*Of.* Likely then  
The prophecy will be ere long fulfilled.

*Ni.* But how, I wonder, could the credulous  
Mons

Have given a priest offence?

*Mes.* One priest o'erpassed  
Even Mons' credulity, asked a staggering loan  
To be repaid with tempting usury  
In the future world. He frowned in the father's  
face,

And muttered, in turning, that the banks of  
heaven

Would have slight dealing with the swindlers'  
hell.

*Of.* Bravo for Mons!

*Ni.* Poor Mons! his last defiance  
Was worth its cost. We need Cotaminus now.  
Him we must have. Empire can scarcely stand,  
Save on the broad foundation of his wisdom.

*Nobles enter.*

*1st N.* Nirus, we leave the king's accursed  
cause,

And join our peasant brethren, till we win  
Our country's Runnymede.

*Ni.* Most gratefully  
To this alliance do we bid you welcome,  
And promise you the deference that befits  
Your rank and culture.

*2nd N.* First would we consult  
Upon one question that as yet delays  
Our unanimity. Indulgence, pray,  
Grant to our classes' weaknesses; a doubt  
Has just arisen, if our dignity  
Were unimpaired, subordinated thus  
To a cause begun by others; and we wonder  
About your origin, which seems, indeed,  
Involved in clouds of secrecy.

*3rd N.* Your honor  
With Varian gives prestige; but you know  
The fairest courtier needs new argument  
For primacy in such war.

*2nd N.* Nor are we, Nirus  
Impertinent in asking some account  
Of all your youth's obscurity. The knight  
That sudden looms before us, and assumes  
This haughtiness of mien may haply drop  
From yonder sky; yet unromantic sires,  
Awaiting his credentials, are most like  
To take for granted that this prodigy  
Came not by miracle from out the clouds,  
But rather in the old prosaic manner

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Rose from a grimy cavern.

*1st N.* 'Twere much, indeed,  
To know what earnest motive gives you impulse  
Outside of mere adventure.

*Ni.* Tell me, pray,  
Your disposition toward the priestly caste  
As represented by the sect that now  
Is holding Castux thrall.

*1st N.* So fierce our scorn  
Of those degenerate wretches who profane  
The holiest calling, that in desperation  
Half of our rank are ready to make war  
Upon the Almighty, merely to emphasize  
Our hatred and defiance of the knaves  
That seem to be his spokesmen.

*Ni.* Then I'll try  
To satisfy at once your just demands,  
And clear up all the darkness that surrounds  
My early life. During the present lull  
In warlike action I have been at pains  
To furnish pastime for the impatient ranks  
That chafe at all delay; and presently  
One episode of my experience  
Will be enacted on our mimic stage  
For such as love the drama. In the pauses  
I'll supplement the story, till my life  
Is your familiar knowledge. You shall learn  
How fierce the passion I have kept alive  
To re-enforce my duty. You shall see  
A hell-fire kindled in my peaceful breast,  
Giving me portion in that brutal might  
Intended not for me, like to a lamb  
With blood transfused from out a lion's veins,  
Till her roar affrights the flock.

## THE PLAY.

*1st Scene. Nirus and Chief-Priests.*

*1st Ch.* Our son, we hear with joy that you  
propose

To dedicate your wealth of intellect,  
And all its hoarded knowledge to the service  
Of the holy Cult.

*Ni.* I know no nobler use  
For all my acquisitions and my powers  
Than service of my God and of mankind.

*2nd Ch.* Well-spoken! and the Cult approves  
and blesses

These lesser gifts of intellect when offered  
In fealty to her.

*Ni.* I freely grant  
That even sovereign reason, kingliest gift  
Wherewith is man endowed, dwindleth away  
To pettiness when cast in sacrifice  
At the feet of God.

*1st Ch.* Thus truly hast thou spoken  
The sum of earthly wisdom. Then beware  
Of magnifying in thy thought or speech  
A faculty so poor.

*2nd Ch.* But evermore  
Be faith your trusted guide; and when these two  
Prove contrary, be not beguiled, but choose  
The angel faith.

*Ni.* These two, it seems to me,  
Cannot be contrary; for faith is born—  
Such faith as I conceive—of reason's self,  
Of reason and of feeling, that sweet consort  
Of reason's royal dignity.

*2nd Ch.* Ha, sir!  
What then if revelation should conflict  
With reason's guidance?



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*Ni.* Revelation, then,  
Is proven false.

*1st Ch.* What! do you then reject  
The holy Book?

*Ni.* Most surely I do not;  
I judge it as a book, a holy book,  
Yet not infallible.

*2nd Ch.* Aha! indeed!  
Have you ever heard of heresy?

*1st Ch.* And he  
That blessed the world ere he sank in the Bur-  
man flames,  
Have you still faith in Rahn?

*Ni.* As in my mother.

*1st Ch.* No more than that?

*Ni.* I could not more.

*2nd Ch.* Indeed?  
His blest Metempsychosis, why surprising  
If that, too, you reject?

*Ni.* I do in truth  
Reject that dogma.

*1st Ch.* Spurning from you thus  
All Rahna's doctrines, what remaining right  
To call yourself a Rahnist?

*Ni.* My acceptance  
Of the Master's primal teachings, of the law  
Of perfect love, God's fatherhood, the kinship  
Of living creatures all; yea, and my need  
And deep heart-yearning for the sympathy  
And fellowship of other Rahnist souls,  
And still more for the kindly ministries  
Of love and pity wherein Rahna once  
Walked upon earth.

*2nd Ch.* Alas! a doubtful service  
You'll render while you walk upon the earth,  
Infecting others with your atheism,

And dragging others with you in your fall  
To the doom of death.

*Ni.* I beg your pardon, truly,  
That I have been intruding on you thus  
Opinions so distasteful. Pray dismiss me  
That I may go about my new-found duties  
In my own way, no more offending you  
With this my differing faith.

*1st Ch.* And do you think  
That Rahna's deputies will e'er consent  
To give their blessing to an infidel  
In priestly garments, to a ravenous wolf  
Clad in sheep's clothing? Shall we furnish for  
him

A spotless fleece to hide his tawny fur,  
Till the flock is ruined? Brother, tell me, pray,  
What is your mind?

*2nd Ch.* 'Tis not our privilege  
To extirpate all evil things that menace  
The welfare of society; and yet  
We may at least withhold from them our sanc-  
tion,

Nor furnish them with clerical disguise  
To mask in.

*Ni.* Do not now deny, I pray,  
The privilege to serve my fellow-men  
That need my ministry. Leave me to God;  
And if my service prove beneficent,  
'Twill prosper then; if otherwise, the winds  
Will sweep my fruitless labor to their limbo  
And leave me empty-handed.

*1st Ch.* We've decided  
And will not reconsider.

*Ni.* Then at last  
Another soul's delivered from the danger  
Of turning bigot. Being outlawed now,

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And free from your conventions, I'll be sure  
To live a nobler life.

*and Ch.*

Farewell, my son!

God bless you, and restore you by his grace  
To knowledge of himself. [*Exeunt chief-priests.*

*Ni.*

Thus are my dreams

Forever shattered. I am driven forth

With insult by the masters of the harvest

From my work amid the sheaves. Within this

Cult

My childhood and my youth have passed away,

And I had hoped to lie down at the end

In my grave-cradle, while the hand of the Cult,

Soft as a mother's, wrapped the turf about me,

Remembered henceforth as her cherished child.

I thought the life was all; and when my creed

Changed with my years, I hoped the Cult would

still

Give sympathy and blessing, and assist me

To realize my mission. Ah! today

I'm more than orphaned. With a breaking heart

I gaze on the empty future.

*2nd Scene. Nirus and a Priest.*

*Pr.* Nirus, the Brotherhood with grief and pain

Have heard about your fall, how even you

Have mocked the pleading eyes of martyred

Rahn

And joined the lewd profaners.

*Ni.*

Rather, sir,

I heed at last those piteous orbs of love,

Discern their eloquent thought.

*Pr.*

Alas, alas!

With words of piety you cannot hide

The cloven hoofs of infidelity

And groveling atheism. There is no hope

Except in Rahn. He is the only way  
Whereby to gain salvation. Who accepts  
Is blest, is blest forever; he that spurns  
That sacrificial offer shall in vain  
Plead for the mercy he hath dared blaspheme.  
O Rahn, I thank thee for these words of comfort.

*Ni.* I the heart-hardened can not share your comfort.

*Pr.* The natural man receiveth not the things  
Of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness  
To such as he. Nor can he ever know them,  
Being spiritually discerned. And yet refusal  
To believe these things can make them no less true.

*Ni.* Refusal of the reason and the conscience  
To accept these dogmas proves that they are false,  
Fit to be spurned.

*Pr.* Alas! who once had thought  
That blasphemy like this would ever flow  
From lips devout as yours were? Tell me, Nirus,  
With deep, self-searching candor, if indeed  
You are sincere.

*Ni.* Pray wait till you yourself  
Have sacrificed a tithe as much as I  
For conscience sake, then come to me again  
And ask that question.

*Pr.* I'll not press you now,  
But leave the question with you to revive  
Daily within your memory. Now I pass  
To another query. By another test  
Urge the self-inquisition. Are you, pray,  
Wholly at peace?

*Ni.* My brother, brother-man!  
Fiendlike you taunt me; you and all your horde

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As fierce as cannibals assail me round  
And for diversion's sake pause now and then  
To ask if I'm at peace. May heaven help me  
Still to reject your peace. May God preserve  
me

In this the great temptation of my life,  
To be disloyal for the sake of peace,  
The shameful peace you offer. I'll admit  
Your Cult hath its beneficence. Its own  
Receive its benediction; and it blesseth,  
As doth a beast of prey, the progeny  
Of its own bosom; who doth not submit,  
It crusheth out his life. Why this discussion  
That cannot bring us nearer? Pray forgive  
My words of bitterness; and let us part  
In Rahna's love.

*Pr.* With all my heart. And yet  
I cannot but compare your attitude  
To a rebellions child's that artfully  
Averts correction due by showering  
A storm of kisses on the threatening hand  
Of the offended mother. This I'll say,  
That Rahna's love can scarcely be expected  
From one who's not a Rahnist. Furthermore  
My duty bids me say that Rahna's love,  
Like the love of God, must not degenerate  
To sentimental weakness. God upholds  
With righteous wrath his justice. So must I,  
God's representative, assume a sternness,  
Meet for rebellion such as you evince  
Against the will of God. I tell you plainly  
Your greatest sin is this morality  
On which you plume yourself. Your outward  
life

May be correct; but God, who searches hearts,  
Judges e'en you, wrapped in the filthy rags

Of your own self-righteousnes. Ha! if in horror  
 We look on convicts with their shameful stripes  
 And shaven crowns, how shall we then regard  
 God's convict who is under sentence here  
 To the endless death-doom! How I beg you,

Nirus,

Turn while you can! You know not but today  
 May be your final chance. I was myself  
 Once a poor sinner; and yet Rahna saved me:  
 And you, too, he can save, and though your sins  
 Are now as scarlet, he will wash them, brother,  
 And make them white as snow.

Ni.

Ha! 'Tis a creed,  
 And not a man insults me; here's no chance  
 To exercise forgiveness. No offence  
 Have I received from you; but may I say  
 Your creed's impertinent and insolent,  
 And being no person, it can have no claims  
 Upon my tenderness? I hate it, sir,  
 As God himself hates sin.

Pr.

You show ill-temper  
 So natural to the man whose heart's untouched  
 By the love of Rahn. I on the contrary  
 By the help of God feel now no irritation,  
 And leave you in all kindness. Think not, Nirus,  
 That we have given you up; for night and day  
 Our prayers will rise before the throne of Rahn  
 For your salvation; you shall be beseiged  
 Month after month my our unwearied pleadings;  
 We'll press upon you in the hour of sorrow,  
 When your heart is breaking; when your death  
 is near,

And your stubborn will grows weak, we'll gather  
 round

And wrest the faint confession from your lips,  
 As they gasp their last, or, failing this, detect

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Your tardy recognition of the faith  
In some significant gesture. Oh! not many  
Escape us finally. [*Exit.*]

*Ni.* Aha! methinks  
'Twould be a pleasant task to pillory  
This pious vulgarity to move the mirth  
Of all posterity. What rare mosaic  
I'll some day make of these fantastic ravings  
Of professional saintship—ludicrous enough  
To a happier race, but unto us, alas!  
Most solemn-tragic with the waiting leer  
Of the headsmen close at hand. I thank my God  
That I am now delivered from the danger  
Of giving up my life to Satan's work  
In this pernicious trade. What other guild  
Has for its only mission to exalt  
And hallow falsehood, and suppress high reason,  
Man's holiest faculty, nipping the bud  
Of every noble thought-life sent by heaven  
To redeem the fallen race? 'Twas this same tribe  
Slew the world's prophet-saint, and still continues  
In every age its old congenial task  
Of mangling the sweet lips of God's good angels  
Just shaping for the evangel.

*3rd Scene. Laura's Home. Nirus. Servant enters.*

*Ser.* My lady presently will see you, sir,  
If you'll tarry for a moment. [*Exit.*]

*Ni.* Presently  
My lady will be here! Oh! ne'er before  
Knew I how much I love her, nor how deep  
My need is for her presence. When she comes,  
The bitterness and misery will flee  
As at a spirit's entrance. She alone  
Of all the world can give me sympathy

And perfect understanding. She can make me  
As gentle as a child, and bring again  
The angel love to reign within my bosom.

*Laura enters.*

O Laura, my own love, in agony  
As deep as soul hath known I come to you  
For strength and solacing.

*Lau.* Nirus, with grief  
Beyond all worlds I heard the sad account  
Of your apostasy.

*Ni.* And you, too, Laura,  
Do you, too, turn against me?

*Lau.* You yourself  
Turn against me, whene'er you turn against  
The Lord I serve.

*Ni.* I have not turned against him;  
I serve him more than ever, and I love him  
As you yourself do. I but cast away  
The cruel creed that violates the spirit  
Of his sweet life and teaching.

*Lau.* 'Tis no use  
To urge these sophistries. I'd rather die  
Than prostitute myself by such a marriage  
With an ungodly man, or wrong my Savior  
By sharing the devotion due to him  
With an unbeliever. [*Exit.*

*Ni.* Why; 'tis better surely  
That I have no hostage now within this Cult  
To hinder me from action. I'll no more  
Employ soft words; I'll compromise no more  
With the evil thing. If ever in my life  
I can persuade a single soul to turn  
And spurn this superstition I shall feel  
My life well-spent. This monstrous tyranny  
Must be resisted. Oh! I must and must  
Be true and loyal, and must dash myself



Against this heartless and unpitying rock,  
 This Peter who the keys of heaven and hell  
 Holdeth so fast, this cruel Sphinx, the Cult.  
 Can I be saint-like gentle, yet fulfill  
 So stern a mission? Let me cultivate  
 More virile virtues, bid adieu for aye  
 To prayer and sonnet. In our vulgar era  
 No tragic hero is acceptable  
 Without some sparkle of infernal fire  
 Mixed with his æther. All the critics hiss  
 That poor monstrosity. All men agree  
 That we need the ballast of some mundane in-  
     stinct  
 To weigh us earthward and prevent our souls  
 From thinning into vapor; mine shall be  
 Hatred of mitred falsehood.

*4th Scene. Nirus.*

Ni. 'Tis not the life I wished, yet after all  
 'Twill be a pleasant life. Among my boys,  
 Teaching my Plato I will live at peace,  
 And in the teacher's ministry I'll merge  
 My ruined priesthood. I'll be like a priest  
 Among my students; and in faith and love  
 I'll spend my mortal days. I'll not engage  
 In conflict with the Cult. The bitterness  
 Engendered in my bosom when I brood  
 Upon these wrongs would turn my human soul  
 To a living hell. I cannot keep alive  
 A single day unless I smother out  
 These fury-flames. I find mine's not a nature  
 Gentle enough to trust amid the frenzy  
 Of such a strife; the fierce delirium,  
 The drunkenness of rage would soon transform me  
 Into a demon. I will live at peace,  
 And pray for love.

*Professor enters.*

*Prof.* I beg you, pardon me,  
That I have kept you waiting. News unpleasant  
Must I communicate. The faculty  
Have reconsidered, and with deep regret  
Recalled the nomination.

*Ni.* Can you tell me  
Why the decision?

*Prof.* Not our preference,  
But exigence external has impelled  
To make this change. A protest from the Cult  
Made necessary, in the interests  
Of the university, that we revoke  
Our previous choice.

*Ni.* Of course I cannot feign  
To hear such news with pleasure; yet I'm sure  
I could not be induced to undertake  
In any place a service that would prove  
Injurious to others.

*Prof.* Once again  
Let me assure you of our deep regret  
At the sacrifice that we have all incurred  
In losing you. I trust that in the future  
The Cult may modify its opposition,  
And leave us free.

*Ni.* I thank you for your kindness

*Prof.* Farewell! and my good wishes. [*Exit.*]

*Ni.* Hunted! hunted!

Pursued to death by packs of yelping wolves,  
Famished with cruelty! My every breath,  
Since I was born, has had the curse of the Cult  
Heavy upon it; when I breathe my last  
This Cult will lay my body in the ground,  
With a final curse, hissing the words of hate  
That scorch with all the imagery of hell.  
Oh! ere I quite succumb to this despair,

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And make a full submission to my foes  
By slaughtering myself, let me but once,  
In sight of heaven, lift a dying protest  
Against my persecutors.

*Priest enters.*

*Pr.* Nirus, my boy,  
I learn with much regret that you are still  
Without employment.

*Ni.* Let my gratitude  
Vie in sincerity with your regret.

*Pr.* My son, I trust you'll learn a useful lesson  
From this experience harsh. Remember, Nirus,  
'Tis Rahnist young men that will always win  
The good positions. [*Exit.*]

*Ni.* Ha! I would to God,  
Or to what brutal force may serve as God,  
That I were learned in the lore of Clio!  
If all the tongues of history were mine,  
I'd celebrate a Pentecost of scorn  
In honor of the Cult. E'er since that reptile  
Learned use of claws, (How came the devil's egg  
In the dove's nest?) it drags its slimy length  
In blood and tears.

*5th Scene. Nirus.*

*Ni.* Let me now leave the past,  
With all its pain and wrong, with all its hope,  
All its ambition. I'll betake me now  
To rural scenes, where nature's love and calm  
Predominate, and hateful human passions  
Are but a weak minority of discord,  
Drowned in the general peace. There I will live  
A gardener's life; for I will not consent  
To fatten breathing souls for sacrifice  
On the bloody shrine of human appetite,  
That Moloch-altar. As a gardener,

To be my passport there, and win for me  
A hallowed fame.

\* \* \* \* \*

The story of my life. By means like this  
I keep alert in me and in my comrades  
The demon of resentment to be drudge  
And eager spaniel of the angelic justice  
That sways our purpose. I who e'er incline  
To mercy and forgiveness do now nurse  
The spirit of revenge, to feed the flame  
Of righteous war, and with a touch of hate  
To make the ideal of philanthropic love  
Real and human. Judge, then, for yourselves,  
If safely you can trust your interests  
To my direction.

**Ni.** Escort these guests

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To refreshment and repose. [*Exit officer, with nobles.*] Cotaminus,  
How to win him to us? Not, certainly,  
By appealing to his conscience.

*Victor enters, with Escort.*

Welcome, Victor!

*Vic.* O Nirus, my dear friend, could we have  
dreamed

That we should meet as foes?

*Ni.* Or that yourself

Would join with Castux to revive today

The Iberian torture-hell?

*Vic.* Oh! I have striven  
To recall misguided Castux.

*Ni.* Yet for him

Do you yourself, no less misguided Victor,

Fight on subservient still.

*Vic.* No answering speech

Seek I to wound you with. Bleeding at heart

I strive with those I love. I falter on

Weak in my agitation when I think

Of this unnatural enmity. Alas!

How great a joy 'twill be for me at last,

My duty done, to perish by your sword!

*Ni.* Dear Victor, may I perish miserably

Ere I raise hand to injure you.

*Vic.* My chief

Being ill himself empowers me to act

In these negotiations.

*Ni.* I am ready.

Let our aids wait upon us.

II. *Victor's Home. Mira. Victor enters.*

*Vic.* Mira!

*Mi.* O Victor, Victor!

*Vic.* How does the little mother in my absence?

*Mi.* Oh! joyfully in dreaming of your presence!

*Vic.* Then I can go in peace. My greeting,  
dear,

Is a hurried farewell. The army instantly  
Resumes the march.

*Mi.* Indeed? 'Tis likely, then,  
That a battle will ensue.

*Vic.* Yet reassure me  
By promising to keep your mind at ease  
And leave all things to God.

*Mi.* Is it not strange  
That I never fear, but through the deadliest peril  
Trust your high destiny?

*Vic.* So I myself  
With equal calm await the arbitrament  
Of each day's fortune. Keep thyself, my love,  
Still beautiful with memories of love,  
With all confiding hopes, all beauteous thoughts  
That blossom from a heart of purity.  
Do not forget me in my absences,  
But cherish in thy soul that flower of love  
That I have planted there. And cherish, too,  
That other flower of love so soon to bloom  
From our engrafted lives. High be her thoughts  
That hath another nature to exalt,  
And not her own alone. Ah! I had hoped,  
My sweet co-laborer, to share with thee  
These wondrous holidays, thy comforter  
And hourly confidant, till we had called  
The pristine peace of wholesome nature down  
In blessing on us. We would talk and read,  
And walk with nature care-free and begin  
Our consecrated parenthood. The world  
In agony is waiting for the day  
Of some great prophet's coming; and each time  
When two young hands join trembling at the

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altar

A piteous plea from sorrow-burdened earth  
Is lifted to these new united souls,  
Beseeching them to dedicate themselves,  
And make so pure a temple of their home,  
That they may lure some heavenlier spirit down  
To that sweet sanctuary. Souls divine  
Are longing for the hallowed nuptial eve  
Of some two hearts so earnest and so true  
That spirits, sharing their devout emotions,  
May thus find human birth. Who knows, dear  
Mira,

But even you and I have triumphed thus,  
Winning the world's redemption? Ah! I would  
That I might share with you these sacred days,  
Blending my voice with yours in hourly prayer  
For the Spirit to descend. And yet, my love,  
Though I must leave you to endure alone,  
Do not be lonely. Do not feel a doubt  
But you shall have my perfect sympathy  
In all your aspirations and your dreams,  
All fears and exaltations of your nature.  
Not so absorbed am I in baser duties  
That I neglect my higher offices  
With memory faithless. For my love I cherish  
All tenderest anxieties and hopes,  
Potent with intercession heavenward,  
Seeking the throne of God.

*Mi.* Oh! be not anxious;

For whether thou be near or far, my love,  
The thought of thee exalts me.

*Vic.* What power in love,

When each augments the other limitlessly,  
Nor loses aught; but every teeming hour  
Both grow more opulent. May heaven protect  
Thee and that new soul. Let it be preserved

To see at last thy venerated face,  
And draw poetic nurture from thy bosom,  
And bow a radiant head upon thy knee,  
Praying to thee and God. Ah! honored Mira,  
I have been full of care and weariness;  
But thou renewest me till my soul is strong.

*Mi.* So, Victor, will I ever give thee comfort  
At every interval of life's hard battle.

That was my dream.

*Vic.* Cherish thyself, my love,  
For now am I to leave thee here behind.

*Mi.* I have mementoes—lips that thou hast  
kissed,

And hands that thou hast clasped, and this true  
breast

That hath felt thy glorious heart-beat, these are  
all

Hallowed to me for thy dear sake. Farewell!

*Vic.* God keep thee, Mira!

*Mi.* My sweet benefactor,  
Now turn aside from thee the hostile missile,  
The assassin's knife, and slander's deadly venom;  
And nothing ever thwart thy destiny!

*III. Victor's Home. Mira, Phinon and Soldiers enter.*

*Phi.* I must require of you a full account  
Of Victor's plans. Necessity of war  
Impels to such abruptness. You are safe  
In our protection, if you now will yield  
The needed information.

*Mi.* I assure you  
I know no plans of Victor.

*Phi.* We all know  
That he consults you often. Recently  
He called upon you, and 'tis probable



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He told you his intentions. Do you fancy  
That I am trifling?

*Mi.* Sir, I say again,  
I have not heard my husband's recent plans;  
Would that I had, that I might still defy you  
To wrench them from my lips. 'Tis waste of  
time

For you to stay here longer.

*Phi.* Ah! indeed?  
I doubt not I shall be constrained at present  
To make my quarters here. And I observe  
Your husband's banner floating from the roof.  
I must request you that it be removed  
From such a haughty station.

*Mi.* My husband's banner  
Shall not be moved.

*Phi.* Pardon! by your own hand.

*Mi.* Puissant colonel, you exaggerate  
Your martial power. Mira will never lower  
Her husband's flag.

*Phi.* Not move the flag? My lady,  
My pretty lady, proud yet vulnerable,  
Comply with my demands; or, as I live,  
I will loose you to my regiment, and bid them  
Forget that they are men.

*Mi.* O Phinon, Phinon,  
I am your cousin! Is there a soldier here  
That has a wife or sister? None will aid!  
Vile wretches, it is woman's blood, not man's,  
That stains the weapons of such coward slaves!  
O butchers, may your bloody visages,  
Returning home from this disgraceful day,  
Frighten your wives, and make your offspring  
monsters! [*Exit a soldier from Phi-*  
*non's rear.*]

*Phi.* Good! that is tragic! Bravo, Mira! Now,

Since pleasures of the mind so far excel  
All sensual pleasure, you shall have reprieve,  
Scheherezade-like, a little space,  
Until breath fail you, if you but vouchsafe  
The music of your far-famed eloquence.  
Sing, caged songstress, out of this full throat,  
And this voluptuous breast, a cadenced swell  
Of plaints and curses, anguish and despair,  
Terror and scorn, until, exhausted quite,  
You lie a tropic burthen in the arms  
Of even timorous lads. Too much, I know,  
Of Phinon's blood is in these veins of yours  
For you to yield; and yet I so delight  
In your despairing passion that I shrink  
From choking out that glorious flame at once  
In shrieking torture-throes.

*Mi.* Inhuman Phinon!

You know that I am vulnerable indeed,  
As in my trembling paleness must appear;  
But you shall see that I am unconquerable,  
And prize my dignity above my life.  
*Phi.* And do you think your dignity forsooth,  
Will be unruffled?

*Mi.* Yes, if I do not yield;  
Only ourselves can ever have the power  
To bring a shame upon us. I prefer  
A great indignity at hands of others  
To a slight one self-inflicted, instrument  
Of my own degradation. You shall find  
That a spirit's not so easily subdued,  
Though manacled in flesh. Your brutal strength  
May grasp—it cannot hold me. Thwarted you'll  
clutch

A heap of earth no more desirable,  
Or passive to you. I shall be transformed  
As Daphne was. Translated I shall be;

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And when you think that I am in your grasp,  
 I shall be trembling in the arms of God,  
 Safe, though still frightened. Or if death delay,  
 What shall I care to suffer violence  
 A little while, and then be free forever?  
 Kill me with torture, and leave my insipid form  
 Upon the ground, and marvel at your folly.  
 Revel in my dust; how trivial is that!  
 'Tis but a portion of the meaningless motes  
 That are visible in the radiance of a soul.  
 And who can harm the soul? Phinon, indeed,  
 Can force base matter to obey his will;  
 Spirit eludes him.

*Phi.* 'Tis useless waiting. *Seizes her.*

*The Soldier re-enters, with Nirus.*

*Na.* Most honored of all women! Brother  
 Phinon,

I recall your past; none with less lofty thoughts  
 Than you have known shall make you prisoner  
 now

In this your hour of darkness. I myself  
 Will be your guard, my tent your cell. Alas!  
 You look so strong, they do not think you ill,  
 But stare, and feel no pity. My friend is dying;  
 I take him to my tent to save his life.

My friend and I are one; his sins are mine;  
 I share in his remorse; a psychic bond  
 Unites us twain. Together let us go  
 To blend our tears and prayers, and to devise  
 Some fraction of atonement, or some deed  
 Of desperate penance, or some bloody plan  
 To execute death-vengeance on ourselves.  
 Mira, your house shall have a faithful guard  
 Has rendered the great service of his life,  
 Fulfilling thus his noble destiny

In Mira's preservation.

*IV. Tent of Nirus. Nirus and Phinon.*

Ni. Ah, Phinon, Phinon!

Phi. You make a great ado  
Over the harlot.

Ni. Phinon!

Phi. She is a woman;  
And therefore has a harlot's qualifications.

Ni. O Ena, Ena!

Phi. Blasphemer, not that name. [*Throws  
himself face downward on the  
couch.*]

Ni. Sleep if you can; I cannot rest or sleep.  
I cannot sleep, but I will pace the tent,  
A weary sentinel. O Phinon, hear;  
Answer me, friend. Ah! I must be more gentle.  
I should come near. Phinon, repel me not.  
I am not certain but our very crimes,  
By giving pathos to our earthly life,  
Would make us dear to angels. This I know—  
That brother's love grows dearer and more dear  
For to-day's calamity. Oh, what a wreck  
Of how devout a nature! What despair  
Has overwhelmed you! Even your blasphemy  
Is uttered sobbingly. 'Tis hard for you  
To live a gross life. Be not sullen thus  
In nature's smiling face. Give back that smile  
In purity and hope. In Ena's name  
I call you to renewal of the joy,  
The goodness once you chose, invoking me  
To be your witness. Ah! you tremble, Phinon?  
Is the music, then, not all departed from thee?  
Let this soft dulcet be the prelude now  
To a full burst of grief's wild melody,

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And then be still forever, that finale  
Echoing in my memory evermore  
With no succeeding discord to displace it.  
*Phi.* Nirus, you know fate rules. Why do you  
plead

Thus inconsistently as if we two  
Could revoke a destiny?

*Ni.* O heavenly powers,  
Are ye not all profane and impious,  
Thus faithlessly to give up such a spirit  
To sin's control? And I—is this my trophy  
To carry with me to eternity?  
This my saved soul? Alas! what base alloy  
Of coarser motive, lurking unobserved  
In that apostleship, hath brought this curse  
Upon my priesthood? *Phinon*, do not think  
That I am ignorant, that I never sinned,  
Or knew remorse, or fell back once again  
When I had thought me safe. Ah! we are broth-  
ers,

And share the same dread destiny. O *Phinon*,  
Brother, look up, look out upon the world,  
And see how beautiful, and then confess  
That you were right in youth, when, full of  
faith,

You gazed on beauty, and read deity  
In each sweet lineament. Is all dark now?  
All things were once so bright. Ah! do you  
think

Your vision now is truer, when you stare  
Into the blackness, than your vision once  
When radiant beauties met your priestly gaze  
Where'er you chanced to turn? Oh! trust again  
Those early revelations and believe  
Once more in beauty, and so once again  
Acknowledge goodness, that divinest beauty,

Renewing your old vows. Look, dearest brother,  
Look through those gathering tears up at the  
light,

The holy light, and find the iris there,  
The beauteous iris, symbol of man's hope;  
And consecrate yourself once more a priest  
Of light and purity. The sunshine now  
Is resting on your brow, a golden blessing,  
Transfiguring and making beautiful  
Your grief-worn temples, sweet rays sent to  
prove

That you can wear a halo. Oh! accept it,  
And win back Ena's presence!

*Phi.*

I accept.

*V. Senate of the Revolutionary Government.  
President of the Senate, Nirus and Senators.*

*Ni.* I wonder at your summons. It disturbs  
Plans of the greatest moment; yet I trust  
That you will not now ask me to reveal,  
And through this secret session spread abroad  
My recent more elaborate designs,  
Just ripe for execution. All is lost,  
If they should now be published.

*Pres.*

Pray be patient,

And wait the Senate's pleasure. [*Senate assem-  
bles.*] Senators,

The general obeys our recent summons,  
And waits to hear your orders. Let the clerk  
Read now our late decree.

*Senators.*

Read the decree!

*Cl.* Decreed by the Senate: Nirus, general  
Of all the people's armies, is relieved  
From further service, in the interest  
Of all the people; Phinon, aid and colonel  
Of the same Nirus, is hereby dismissed,

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Degraded to the ranks.

*Ni.* My poor Phinon!  
They have cast him out to frenzy. In her presence!

*1st S.* Do not yield, Nirus, to this cursed plot.

*2nd S.* The army will support you, and the people.

*3rd S.* As you are a patriot, now be resolute;  
Be faithful to the people.

*Many Senators.* Silence, traitors. [*Great uproar.*]

*Ni.* With dutiful heart from lofty undertakings,  
In the midst of my success I now desist.  
I am a poor man; I have not been born  
With mighty hosts to be my property.  
These armies are my country's, not my own;  
I have no right to wield them disallowed,  
Not even for unselfish service. I acknowledge  
That this glorious breath of life which late was  
mine

My country gave, and it can take away;  
And I complain not.

*4th S.* Bravo, bravo, Nirus!

*5th S.* Demagogue!

*6th S.* Hypocrite!

*Ni.* My country's will,  
Once delegated to this great assembly,  
Is exercised through it, and till recalled  
Requires my full submission, till at last  
My sentence is revoked, and I am given  
The hope of life again. Oh! I do feel  
A leaping of the blood that prophesies  
All glorious achievement; and methinks  
That I should find it quite as easy now  
To do great deeds as to upraise my eyes  
To yonder regal heavens—how close they are

To him whose heart is true! But I refuse  
To be great lawlessly; I choose death first;  
And dead I am unless I be engaged  
In lofty deeds. I wait the resurrection;  
Not as a mutinous ghost, reproachably  
Will I embrace the glory of a life  
To walk an outlawed spirit in the night;  
But I will wait till called forth honorably  
To renew my destined triumph.

*Senators.* Bravo, bravo!

*1st S.* Shame on the Senate!

*5th S.* Silence!

*Ni.* If that time  
Shall never come, then I will still be dead,  
And silent rest with patience in the tomb,  
And not usurp the light.

*Senators.* Ah, Nirus, Nirus!

*Pres.* Let us have order!

*Senators.* Order!

*Ni.* If you grant  
That I may choose my grave, let me depart  
This moment to the front, and be entombed  
There in the ranks, among my noble comrades,  
A faithful soldier, proud enough to serve,  
Although I might command. I yield my sword  
To the officer of the Senate, to be held  
In trust for my successor. May our country  
Be gainer from the change! And now farewell,  
Neighbors and countrymen!

*3rd S.* Honor to Nirus!

*4th S.* Down with the tyrant Senate!

*5th S.* A traitor's voice!

Let it be silenced!

*6th S.* Down with all senators  
That are traitors to their order.

*Ni.* I'll not now



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Abandon Phinon; I will stay beside him;  
And he shall yet be saved. I now am freed  
From other duties, and can dedicate  
My service all to him.

*Song of Partisans.*

He that standeth at our head,  
We' can trust him surely.  
We shall be no more misled,  
He will guide us purely.

Like a king in force of will,  
Fit for scepter-wielding,  
Lives he like a peasant still,  
All his kingship yielding.

History can never know  
Half our hero's greatness,  
He himself represeth so  
All its dread completeness.

*VI. Two Officers.*

*1st Of.* Good morning, comrade. Now what  
pleasing thought?

*2nd Of.* I know good news for us and for Ta-  
linis.

*1st Of.* Good news? How possible, with Nirus  
gone,

The army mutinous, and this great defeat?

*2nd Of.* Have you not heard? Ah! you have  
been abroad,

And only just now landed. On the high seas  
One's wholly out of the world.

*1st Of.* Pray, tell me all.

*2nd Of.* I'll tell if you are patient, and will wait,  
Nor be importunate, while I go back

To make my tale connected, humoring thus  
My literary instinct. Victor, you know,  
The earnest Victor, never seemed at ease  
As tyranny's defender. Nirus oft,  
In many a parley, moved him to remorse,  
Pleading the people's cause; yet still the oath  
Sworn to the king, and churchly fealty  
Held Victor back, as well as the strange spell  
Of kingly birthright, and the deep reproach  
Upon the name of traitor, and perhaps  
The thought of his own kinship to the purple,  
Remote, yet not forgotten. Still he hoped  
That his great influence would prevail at last,  
And end the persecution. Vain that hope;  
And he at length resolved. Then came the story  
Of Phinon's wickedness, and with it reached him  
Accounts perverted of the seeming slight  
That Nirus, pardoning Phinon, offered Mira,  
Who is, indeed, in peril of her life,  
Because of that fright and insult. Victor, then,  
Remained aloof from Nirus, and was fierce  
Upon the royal side, and soon eclipsed  
His former glory with a victory  
That nearly ruined us; for on the day  
When Nirus was recalled, our army, left  
Without its leader, was attacked by Victor  
And almost overwhelmed. But then he learned  
That Nirus was dismissed. The senate, thinking  
That Nirus might be spared and Victor won,  
Had shamefully discharged our general,  
Phinon and him together, twin offenders,  
A two-fold obstacle. Then Victor, glad  
For honor's sake to seize our darkest hour,  
Came to our side; and all his own command,  
Eager to share his fortunes, willingly  
Followed him hither, half the king's best men,

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Varian's veterans. But the generalship  
The upright Victor spurns, no base deserter  
For mere promotion. Now's a quandary  
Whom we shall choose.

*1st Of.* Why, any one of twenty  
Among the friends of Victor, so he possess  
Good sense and dignity, and the modesty  
To repress himself and follow Victor's counsel.

*2nd Of.* Why check the historian's rhetoric,  
needlessly

Marring your entertainment. The noble Nirus,  
Yielding submissively his high command  
Did not thereby resign his fiery zeal  
Against the priest-led tyrant, but set forth  
To join the people's ranks with musket borne  
More proudly than a sword, leaving the Senate  
Uneasy for the outcome. Then so swift  
Was Victor's action, that when Nirus came,  
The brief, decisive battle had been fought,  
And Victor, learning the disgrace of Nirus,  
Had now declared for us. Nirus at once  
Hearing the cause of Victor's alienation,  
Sought Victor out, and wringing from his eyes  
Compassionate tears for wretched Phinon's fate,  
Won back the friendship and esteem of Victor  
Stronger than ever. While the Senate waited  
In growing trepidation, there was brought  
A generous message from the hand of Victor,  
Which set them all a-flutter. Quickly then  
The courier lightning sped upon its way  
To summon Nirus back. Anxious he came  
Into the Senate's midst, the while they sat  
Ashamed and yet well-pleased, not to condemn,  
As he expected, but with loud applause  
To give back all his honors. There as he stood  
Astonished in the midst, Cotaminus,

Escorted to his side, with graceful speech  
 Transferred to us his civic skill, as lately  
 Victor his martial genius. Then what triumph  
 Shone in our hero's eye! "Cotaminus,"  
 With radiant face he cried, "far better this  
 Than a victory won in arms. I take your coming  
 As a happy omen for our new Talinis,  
 To which I welcome you—you that have served  
 In two kings' counsels with such diligence,  
 And yet are stainless of their tyrannies."  
 A louder peal of acclamation rolled,  
 Re-echoing Nirus' name. Then swiftly gleamed  
 Within his eye a glitter Caesar-like  
 Of vanity divine, as if a splendor  
 Before undreamed—a scepter's glorious flame—  
 Flashed out in vision from futurity.

*1st Of.* Ah! no; it could not be. Mar not my  
 trust

That Nirus is all-innocent of heart,  
 A Cincinnatus, a child-humble hero  
 For all men to repose in.

- *2nd Of.* A moment later  
 The pastoral mien returned. Yet for an instant,  
 The crown was in his thought, and not disdained,  
 And not rejected, till in sight of men  
 It blazed sublimely forth. What flattery  
 From the godhead of his genius thus to win  
 The glorious homage of his vast desire!  
 O world, be proud, and deck thyself with flowers,  
 If even great Nirus bows to us his soul,  
 Needing the bounteous fullness of our love  
 To complete his being's void. That passionate  
 mood

May have left no memory there, to burn and  
 glow

In his wonted thought; yet for a moment-space

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Its light shone forth effulgent. Ah! be sure  
If Nirus care to win us, he'll not find us  
Coy to his wooing.

*1st Of.* I fear that you yourself  
Would reverse nature and yourself turn wooer.  
I rebuke you not; I, too, begin to share  
The eager agitation.

*2nd Of.* But the news,  
The wondrous news that lighted up my face,  
And called forth your inquiry, I have not yet  
Told you that news. My recapitulation—

*A Group of Soldiers enter.*

*1st Sol.* Our divine Nirus breathes the breath  
of life

From his own nostrils into every creature,  
Till it is recreated in his image,  
And can itself perform like miracles  
Of lofty heroism.

*1st Of.* What new achievement?

*2nd Sol.* The Arctic expedition is returned.

*3rd Sol.* And comes in triumph from the mar-  
velous pole.

*2nd Of.* That was the news that gave me such  
delight.

*4th Sol.* Attained is the goal of centuries.

*2nd Of.* 'Twas Nirus

Inspired the enterprise.

*5th Sol.* Except for him

It ne'er had been accomplished.

*Song.*

The frigid monarch of snow,  
The monarch of war and woe,  
Was reigning there on the mountains,  
The mountains of ice and snow.  
We entered the ice-bound bay;  
We battered the ramparts away:

We reached the frozen fountains,  
Reached them on Freedom's day.

*Refrain.*

Oh, glorious jubilee!  
Ours the golden key  
To the heart of all mystery!

We hurled the ice-king prone  
Down from his hateful throne,  
And gave to new-born Science  
The mystic North for her own.  
Polaris, tremble thou  
To rest upon her brow.  
Hail, Freedom's world-alliance!  
Hail, banner regnant now!

*Refrain.*

We planted our ensign bright  
In realms of arctic night,  
To banish the gloom infernal  
With beams of that banner of light.  
O flag of the free, e'er shine  
'Neath the orbs that ne'er decline  
And let earth's homage diurnal,  
Till it rotate no longer, be thine.

*Refrain.*

*3rd Officer enters.*

3rd Of. More happy news. The land is wild  
with triumph!

Soronia and Cleria are convulsed  
With our great general's footsteps. Secretly

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He sent his arms to overwhelm them both,  
And all his plans succeed.

*2nd Of.* What brought about  
This sudden revolution?

*3rd Of.* You recall  
The story told of Nirus when in youth  
He went as envoy to Soronia,  
Sent by King Castux. Aged Hensius  
Was so delighted with the kingly youth,  
Who put on hauteur like a robe of state,  
Even in the royal presence, and maintained  
His manly dignity as no less high  
Than majesty itself—old Hensius  
Was gleeful, and exclaimed, "Ah! he is royal;  
He is no piteous slave, like common men,  
Made for a subject; Nirus is a king,  
And only waits a throne. Let him have mine."  
When Hensius should die, a distant kinsman  
Must gain the throne, to rule with feeble hand,  
And sacrifice the honor of the crown  
In many a timid makeshift policy,  
And many a deed of shame to bring the blush  
For manhood's sake upon the subject's cheek.  
Before the royal patriarch expired,  
Nirus became the hero of the world,  
And rumor spread among the peasantry  
That good King Hensius had prophesied  
That Nirus should be king, and had desired  
That Nirus should succeed him. Then the people  
Kept telling one another of his deeds  
And of his virtues. Fair Soronia wished  
To be his bride, and longed to cast herself  
Down at his feet to be within his power,  
And over her to feel his mighty presence.  
In vain the king protested and denied;  
The king had made a prophecy; and kings

Inspired of heaven foretell futurity,  
 Though they know it not themselves; nay, verily  
 'Twas but a surer proof—this very fact  
 That Hensius did not understand himself  
 The meaning of his words. It rendered certain  
 That some diviner prescience spoke through him,  
 And made the future known. Then when at  
 last

King Hensius was no more, and they were ruled  
 By such a piteous imbecile, they cried  
 For Nirus to relieve them.

*1st Of.* And how, pray,  
 Has Cleria now been won?

*3rd Of.* In Varian's time  
 Nirus was friendly to the Clerians,  
 And they have not forgotten. Then of late  
 Their banished kings have plotted for the throne,  
 With our king's aid; they dread with equal dread  
 Castux and their own tyrants, still alive,  
 And venomously formidable of race.  
 Nirus approached them with his matchless skill,  
 And won them to him. If we gain this war,  
 All Cleria will be ours.

*Confusion without. Shouts of, "Castux is slain." Soldiers enter.*

*1st Of.* Is Castux slain?

*6th Sol.* Yes; he is dead, slain by a treacherous  
 servant.

Our victory is won; his soldiery  
 Are all disbanded, and his brother fled.

*2nd Of.* Ah! chaos is upon us, and will last  
 Till Nirus comes to end it. If he calm  
 The anarchy of three empires, let him reign.

*Citizens.* Down with Nirus! Long live the re-  
 public!



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*Song.*

Talinis, now, prophet-like, gentle and strong,  
Walk thou with one soul in the pathway of truth,  
Redeeming the nations from bondage and wrong,  
Extending the empire of justice and ruth.

The wise men prophetic who came from the east  
Pointed out the bright star that hung over thy  
way;

And poor men watched as thy stature increased,  
Impatient with hopes that are fruitful today.

And now, at last is thy dignity gained;  
The crown of maturity graces thy brow;  
And promise and symmetry newly attained  
Bless the eyes of the nations that look on thee  
now.

Talinis, now, prophet-like, gentle and strong,  
Walk thou single-souled in the pathway of truth,  
Redeeming the nations from bondage and wrong,  
Extending the empire of justice and ruth.

*VII. Phinon, standing over a dead Body.*

*Phi.* Furies! I would I had torn the living heart  
Out of his naked body, rending the giblet  
While still 'twas beating! Ha! I'm drunk with  
rage,

Till I can only reel; and all my passions  
Are fiercely roused within me, as if all  
Were gratified in hate. My fleshly substance  
Is changed to air, my blood to a winged thing  
That beats its red wings through me like a harpy,  
Eager for loathsome cruelty. Ye fiends!  
Although my foe were set with poisonous darts  
As close as quills on a porcupine, not less

My passion would upon him. Ah! those limbs  
That moved so proudly, they are mangled now  
To utter shapelessness. That bosom grand  
Which so defied the world is torn and hacked  
To invite the maggots sooner. And that brow  
Which would have scorned the very crown it  
wore

Had I let him live to wear it—now ye see  
That brow is hideous with frightful death.  
I will not lacerate his countenance;  
That shall remain for all to recognize,  
Knowing that it is Nirus thus debased  
And shamed eternally. Hark! footsteps come!

*[Goes out, but immediately returns.]*

A false alarm! Now he is low indeed  
And has no virtue. Can that face now flush  
At any coarseness, or become more pale,  
Or change its aspect till the hand of death  
Blackens all into humus? Ah! I will shout  
All vileness in his ear; soon we shall see  
If still he have sufficient virtue in him  
To bring an anguish to these eyes that stare,  
Glazed into horror. What though I always failed  
To make him grovel? He held out while he  
could;

But now he yields. In one dread moment's time  
He falls in ashes. My decay has come  
More gradual. I have let my nature sink  
More easily and gracefully; and death  
Will not be such a shock. He's viler now  
Than had he sinned. The dead thing's far below  
The very brutes. We were so much more wise  
To recognize our station, nor disown  
The kindred dust. Whenever we resist  
Surrounding chaos, we can only add  
One more discordant element to swell

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The vast confusion. Every lovely thing,  
 Each harmony divine, only augments  
 The roaring chaos. Ha! a form approaches!  
 Let me escape! [*Goes out, and then re-enters.*]

Again am I deceived!

My senses fail me! I alone am true,  
 And he disloyal. Truth he taught to me  
 That himself abides not by. Reason he preached,  
 In place of faith, and yet clandestinely  
 Reserved one strenuous faith to save himself  
 In defiance of his reason, still reserved  
 Unreasoning faith in virtue, and refused  
 To stand by me when I would be consistent  
 By making vice my ethics. Why did he lure me  
 From my strong tower, the stable centuries,  
 That center-rooted rock whose firm support  
 No earthquake can unfix? Curses upon him!  
 Why did he rob me of the guardianship  
 Of the great paternal past? Did he suppose,  
 When he had ruined the authority  
 Of hoary eld, that maxims of a day  
 Would check my unyoked impulse?

Nothing less

Than flames of hell, licking across the void,  
 Like tongues of hungry wolves, with fearful  
 menace,

Could fright that passion silent. Fierce revenge,  
 Be thou exultant. See how poor lies here  
 He that looked loftily, and now is thrust  
 Lower than reptiles! Hasten, pitying Time,  
 Hider of shame; roll round a few more months,  
 Till he shall be no more repulsive thing  
 Than the odorless clay. Let all the dupes ap-  
 proach

That worship him, and put him hastily  
 Out of their loathing sight! Ah! how I pray

That they may not discover him for weeks,  
 And then come on him in a gorgeous train  
 Of pride and pomp! Such punishment is fit  
 For them that violate their natural state  
 By striving to be upright. What are they  
 But mere excrescences of this vile earth  
 That try to shine like stars? This man I slew  
 Has taunted me with his heroic life  
 That I knew was false, because so contrary  
 To all our human destiny. I choose  
 The life more rational, although it jar  
 With sensibility. Ha! is he slain?  
 I hate him now no longer; hate, indeed,  
 Calls loud for blood, but soon is satisfied,  
 And then is passive. Now 'tis done at last,  
 And I'm at peace. How simple an enterprise  
 To take a life! I'll end by slaying myself  
 Before the moon shall wane. Goblins and devils!  
*[He ascends a thick-branched tree. Nirus and  
 Cotaminus, in conversation, go by, accompanied  
 by Melno.]*

Ni. Destiny ruleth; yet his human will,  
 The child of destiny, but uttereth  
 That larger will, till he is proudly free  
 In the universe his home. He feels himself  
 Not Nature's tool, but part of Nature's being,  
 Harmonious with her purpose.

Mel. The very words  
 I said myself only the other day  
 When Myron and I were rubbing down our  
 nags.

Co. Will you hold your tongue?

Mel. I didn't mean any harm.

*[They pass on. Phinon descends.]*

Phi. Nirus himself goes by, he that I slew!  
 Have I made a spirit of my mortal foe,

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Strong to revenge with tortures brought from  
hell,  
Himself invulnerable? Is't Nirus yonder?  
Or is it I? Uncanny is my life,  
To be thus multiplied. I shall not dare  
To look on any face, lest I may find  
My own blood-curdling features sent to mock  
me.

Ah! what convulsion has rent up my soul  
Into so many fragments? Part of myself  
I miss most poignantly; my virtue's gone,  
Wandering bodiless, an eccentric soul,  
Or occupying some more blessed form  
Made in my image. Nirus did I see?  
And is he double? Can he thus divide,  
To multiply my task? So much I hate him,  
I'd have him sprout like the Hydra to renew  
The joy of his killing. Wonderful his resemblance

To Nirus and me! But Nirus is out of the problem;

I'll vouch for Nirus; the houris of Paradise  
Couldn't kiss him awake.

*A Workingman rushes by shrieking. Phinon runs out in another direction. Nirus, Cotaminus and Melno hasten back.*

Ni. Oh, Phinon, Phinon!

Co. No, 'tis one disguised.

Ni. 'Tis the actor, Mira's brother. Melno, go  
Bring Victor, and the proper officers.

Mel. You honor me with such a high commission,

To the great Victor from still greater Nirus.

[Exit.

Ni. Ah! he has personated me tonight,  
In this disguise going through all my life

In one short evening, reaching the final scene,  
Sooner than I do. Does he die for me?  
By my foe's hand, perchance? I feel, my friend,  
That I have died by proxy, that this pain,  
And this unspeakable indignity  
Are mine, not his. Ah! I am vulnerable.

Co. He was our greatest actor.

Ni. And a man  
Of upright character.

Co. No other actor  
Has yet succeeded with this noble play  
That celebrates your fame. The others all  
Are hooted from the stage; and he alone,  
Whose solemn earnestness and dignity  
Make a religion of the mimicry,  
Is heard with joy and eager applause.

*Melno enters from behind.*

Ni. This sight  
Enforces what I said a moment past,  
When that fearful cry appalled us. 'Tis for us  
To glory in the nobleness we win,  
Not as our own, but as a light divine  
That plays a moment o'er our mortal brows  
To evidence itself, and so by chance  
Renders us beautiful, until again  
It passes on to others, leaving us  
Invisible and cold.

Co. 'Tis true.

Mel. Why, yes!  
That's what I always said to my good woman.

Co. Well, fool! Where's Victor?

*Victor and Officers enter.*

Mel. Here he comes. He's a hero,  
And bears up bravely.

Vic. Only an hour ago

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I saw him sound and well. I walked here with  
him

After the play.

*Mel.* How fortunate it is  
That you were with him, you of all the world!  
It must have been a comfort when he died  
To know that he had seen you.

*Ni.* Melno, peace!  
Where shall we have him borne? To your home,  
Victor?

*Mel.* Why, yes! Where else?

*Vic.* Not there—on Mira's account.

*Co.* To my house, then.

*Mel.* Why, yes! the very place!

### *VIII. Phinon and Cotaminus.*

*Phi.* Now to prove,  
As I have been asserting, that the crime  
Was done by Victor's hand.

*Co.* Have you procured  
Evidence ample?

*Phi.* Men of such repute,  
So numerous support us that a jury  
Is likely to convict him. Do your part,  
And the issue is certain.

*Co.* Sir, do not forget  
That, being the judge, and not the prosecutor,  
I shall maintain my attitude impartial,  
And follow the evidence strictly.

*Phi.* I understand  
The situation fully, and I thank you,  
As one fiend thanks another. Do you fancy  
I'd have you show yourself a partisan,  
To vitiate the verdict? Nothing I ask  
That can sully your ermine. I ask but that you  
show

No fear or favor. I myself can answer  
For the part of the accusation. Let them howl  
At their vice-god's sudden peril. In the court  
They'll sink into gasping silence, not one voice  
To tell me I lie, or thwart me in revenge,  
Or foil your primacy. Then will I speed  
To the deepest sea, and plunge me headlong  
down

To drench the memory out. [*Exit.*

*Co.* Ugh! how I loathe him!

The fellow seems quite desperate enough  
To have done the deed himself.—Merciful  
heavens!

That man of mine who came home raving mad,  
And now, confined, keeps shrieking with white  
lips

About three Niruses, one running fast  
With bloody knife, another lying dead,  
And still another, he accompanied  
By two vile horned devils; if he now  
Were sane enough to testify, who knows  
But he might change the verdict?

*IX. The Senate.*

*President.* The time has now arrived, as you  
recall,

Fixed for a weighty subject. We discuss  
Our future government, if we prefer  
Republic, or if monarchy. To-day  
Do we decide what further we desire  
That Nirus serve us, whether as late proposed  
He shall be now rewarded with the throne  
Of this new empire.

*1st Sen.* If I have permission  
To correct the statement, not for his reward,  
Who needs no guerdon, but for our salvation,



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Who need his guidance, patriots now propose  
The imperial honor. It may be, indeed,  
That he will not accept. He knows not yet  
Of this new proposition. There is doubt  
Of his approval. Still, at duty's call  
I trust he'll not repulse us, but be gracious  
To our appeal.

*2nd S.* He must, he must!

*3rd S.* Beware!

If he were a winged angel, we might shrink  
From tempting him thus.

*4th S.* If he were a very devil,  
Such consecration well might make him earnest  
And higher-thoughted.

*2nd Sen.* Anything for a king  
But the imbeciles of the past!

*3rd S.* No king at all,  
Not even great Nirus, though I honor him  
Beyond all men! Though he crown all history,  
'Twere better slay him outright than awake  
That fierce fire of ambition in his breast,  
Kinghood's high passion, planted in our veins,  
Like manhood's vigor, for beneficent  
And fruitful services, and yet endowed  
With energy so terrible that nothing  
Save mediocrity can save the statesman  
From ruining his country and himself  
With that great madness.

*5th S.* Madness well you say  
Of one whose eccentricities fall short  
But little of that state.

*6th S.* Pray, on what ground  
Base you that calumny? Does he converse  
With shapes invisible, beholding fiends  
In the blank air? Or does he fail to see  
What other men behold? Does he look awry,

Seeing some objects crooked? Do his senses  
Ever mislead him, so that he disputes  
With other men's perceptions? Pray, what then?  
He is peculiar, does not wear his cap  
According to the standard, does not wink  
In concert with the burghers, absents himself  
From social muster-days, forgets to smile  
When senators make puns. Ah! certainly  
His Genius leads him into desert paths,  
And great emotions do contort his face  
Incongruous with its fellows, and his lips  
Wear not the current sneer. Do you demand  
From that deep brow a pretty social simper,  
As shallow as a pebble-bottomed brook's,  
From that great brow which globes eternally  
Oceanic depths of thought? Nay, rather say  
Thought soul-deep, at all angles raying forth  
Indefinite, a vast sphere-universe.  
'Tis true, alas! our Nirus takes no part  
In weather-senates, or in tournaments  
Of repartee. Thank God, he does not mingle  
Among the harlequins; yet he retires  
For no uncanny purpose, for no converse  
With fiends and phantoms. He retires to live  
A soul's own life; and even you marketers,  
If ever you grow sane and serious,  
And know a tranquil passion, you will feel  
The fellowship of Nirus; you will find  
Our Nirus not eccentric, but yourselves  
And all your generation, who depart  
From central truth, and wander aimlessly  
Amid the coarse conventions.

5th Sen.

He's a skeptic.

Shall such a man be seated on our throne,  
To make us all turn heathen?

7th Sen.

Ha! the gods,

May they not scorn each other, yet demand  
The worship of the world? We have no vote  
In their morality. 'Tis ours alone  
To bow before their glory. Such a man  
Has quite outgrown the time of worshipping,  
Ready himself to be worshipped; majesty  
Higher than goodness. All those human blots  
That hide the nobleness of lesser lives  
Are but as dots on his world-ample brow.  
The breath of being such a man derives  
From another god than ours; his entity  
Is not our own. 'Tis something after all  
That he has not a moment been beguiled  
By these tongued heretics; them he repulsed  
As much as us.

**8th S.** Alas! how piteous  
To see that earnest man's appealing eyes,  
Seeking in vain some mission! A great pain  
Out from the depths of his forlorn priesthood  
Slow-gathers o'er his face. Yes; it is sad,  
But calls for no apology from us  
Whose faith is vowed to Nirus and to God.  
And who believe that God is far too good  
Not to admire and love a man like Nirus;  
For God is a profound and earnest spirit,  
Who thinks high thoughts, and lives for noble  
ends.

And loves high-minded men, and is not vain  
To hear the clamorous plaudits of the world,  
Like a mere politician, or men's thanks,  
Like a frail human parent. I suppose  
When men kneel down and utter long praise-  
speeches,

As if he were unable to hear thought,  
He listens lovingly and tenderly,  
And thinks he has good children after all,

Despite their little errors; still I fancy  
That God could live without such things. I  
fancy

He is more pleased to see men grown mature,  
Able to help him in his benefactions.  
That spirit is most precious in God's sight  
Who takes God's gift of manhood most devoutly,  
And guards that sacred fragment of the godhead  
Most tenderly and purely. God, perchance,  
Prizes no whit the less our hero's worship  
For its noble blasphemies. What if our God  
Be large of heart himself, magnanimous,  
Like a great man, well-pleased when noble souls,  
Even in their adoration, stand erect  
Not undefiantly, with haughtiness,  
Responsive to his own?

Than garments of our thought, not more than  
dress

Authoritative to establish rank  
 Or prove the heart. An earnest mind retains  
 Through all the wide vicissitudes of creed  
 Its high direction. Who but envies Nirus  
 His triumph in the test of outlawry?  
 Whene'er society deprives a man  
 Of all its recognition and protection,  
 Dissolving the old covenantal bonds  
 With the individual, and by such affront  
 Annuls his obligations, then his conduct  
 No more restrained, no more directed then  
 By influence conventional, reveals  
 What spirit's in him. I envy Nirus, truly,  
 His attitude unique. We may be led  
 By hope or fear. The world can never know  
 How lofty are our motives. But here's Nirus,  
 Who has no hope or fear, still keeping the way,

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Among the foremost; proving to all ages  
That love of good impels him.

5th S. Ah, indeed!  
I have no doubt that he considered this,  
When he chose his course. Hypocrisy unique,  
A sanctimonious infidel!

6th S. Of course  
You are resentful that a man is found  
Practicing Sabbath virtues all the week,  
To cheapen your own piety. If God,  
Supposing God there be, should undertake  
To let our Nirus into heaven, will you  
Cast an opposing ballot, nor consent  
To his admission? Oh! I know that you  
Compose the aristocracy of faith;  
And we are doubtless outcasts from the pale  
Of all religious circles, nor belong  
To you of the elite. We poor plebeians  
Are only boors, and pay but slight regard  
To recognized conventions used in worship.  
We who care not to enter society,  
And so continue still outside your Cult,  
Are quite unfashionable. Oh, yes, indeed!  
We are entirely unpresentable  
In fine religious drawing-rooms. And yet  
I cannot help believing that we know  
As well as you the fine amenities  
Of love and of devotion, are not less  
Familiar with the natural etiquette  
Appropriate to spirits. If in truth  
You do consign us to the dread Gehenna  
Of your disapprobation, we will find  
In hell itself a home and sanctuary,  
And have the flowers of truth and love and faith  
And reverence blooming there, an oasis  
Even there amid the desert. We will scorn,

Scorn and defy you, whether bitterly  
 You cry against us, or, compassionate,  
 Look curious upon us, as it were  
 Tapping your foreheads, the only charity  
 Permitted by your creed. Yes, we are outlawed,  
 Though in this desolation and denial  
 We find our consecration; and our priest,  
 Our Nirus pure with pain, who long ago  
 Renounced the world in that great sacrifice  
 Of human brotherhood, when he left hope  
 And chose the desert, Nirus, our pure saint,  
 Is sadder than to need your suffrages  
 Or your approval. This day's great decision  
 Can not affect him. Now we cast our votes  
 For a sublime idea, not for Nirus.  
 We have no hope to temper the dread glory  
 On the face of Nirus, with vivacious gleams  
 Of worldly eagerness. He is beyond  
 Our hopes and our ambitions. Not for him,  
 But for ourselves and you, do we aspire  
 To this our new ideal, to behold  
 A nation's consecration.

*4th S.* Must we listen  
 To rant that never ends upon a theme  
 Wholly irrelevant? Not five here present,  
 Though he worshiped a whole Pantheon, would  
 suppose him

A whit more qualified. I make appeal  
 To the President to limit this debate  
 To legitimate topics.

*Pres.* Pray, confine discussion  
 To the question of public policy.

*6th S.* I yield  
 To my laconic colleague. He'll not fail  
 To speak to the point.

*4th S.* Make an exception now

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In history's latest law. Suspend awhile  
The sovereignty of the people. Raise we Nirus  
To the throne of the world, that so may be re-  
newed

The dull historic page, that mighty poets  
May be again called forth, and the land be filled  
With oratoric glory, till we prove  
That heavenly genius, not yet obsolete,  
Waits only for the call of lofty deeds,  
That all the maiden beauty of the world  
Sleeps ever youthful, waiting to be roused,  
Waiting some touch of ancient chivalry  
To revive the blush of life. Ah! break we now  
The great rule of equality. Let Nirus  
Be now developed. As we saw unfold  
His intellectual powers, no less completely  
Let now his power in action be expanded  
To its full natural glory. This is the hero  
To whom the piety of all our race  
Has evermore aspired; no deity  
With startling claims and miracles' attest  
And largess of high gifts; only a man,  
A common man in whom our shapeless passions  
Fuse into sacred symmetry, a mesh  
For the spiritual breath of life, our vulgar hues  
Blent in the white of manly dignity,  
Our pitiful noises grown harmonious  
To join the spheric music.

5th S. You that have spurned—

4th S. Am I interrupted?

5th S. Only a question, please.

'Twill furnish you with a text.

4th S. Pray, briefly, then,

Let us hear the question.

5th S. You, sir, that have spurned  
The heaven-blest claims of legitimate royalty,

**4th S.**                      How shall a patriot  
Hearing this speech, now doubt our need of  
Nirus

5th S. O rash, deluded people,  
Thus to reject that one great house which gave  
us

4th S. For the sake of that past  
We hide from sight forever the disgrace  
Of a house once noble.

And can give a hundred more!

4th S. I tell you, sir,  
This house has lost the power of reproducing  
A kingly character.

5th S. Only try it again ;  
A single generation may suffice  
To renew the glories of old. You must not  
crown

**This peasant prodigy, Nirus. Think you his race**



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Can yield you monarchs? You'll see a crown-  
prince soon

Desert his throne to be keeper of the ale-house  
Where his cousins hiccough.

4<sup>th</sup> S.                    Some recent royal princes  
Had won eulogium by so wisely gauging  
Their native endowments. Should we be de-  
prived

Of prince so precious, we would seek again,  
Among the peasants one more prodigy  
Of Jesse's stock, wearing the aureole  
Of truth and wisdom on his innocent brow,  
Marking it for the crown. We'll serve hence-  
forth

The man that's kingly himself, and not accept  
A caitiff again, though he boast a thousand  
grandsires

That sat on the throne.

6<sup>th</sup> S.                    If heirship you demand,  
Shall Varian's will be null? Who longer doubts,  
From the evidence now published, that he pur-  
posed,

Should issue fail him, to adopt as heir  
The gifted Nirus, and exclude forever  
Beggarily Castux?

5<sup>th</sup> S.                    Ah! the world hath seen  
Its noblest days, if blasphemy like this  
Against the royal blood can now find tongue,  
And men not blanch with horror.

3<sup>rd</sup> S.                    O Liberty,  
O Liberty, what ignominious death  
O'ertaketh thee, when I, thy lowliest lover,  
Falter thus at thy name!

4<sup>th</sup> S.                    Sincere old man,  
You strive in vain to    impede the splendid  
pageant

Of this imperial epoch.

3<sup>rd</sup> S.

Ah! you desire

Merely a splendid spectacle for men,  
Careless of one man's passion? Is it well  
That for the pastime of the multitude  
One man should perish? Nirus, then, is worthy  
That you should place him as a gladiator  
Before the nations. Drag Apollo down  
To mutilating combat, that the world  
May see what gods are able to perform,  
Before they perish. Let that noble shape,  
With all its radiant and voluptuous life,  
Be bowed before you in the agony  
Of torture manifold, the fire of being  
Consumed away in one o'ertopping flame,  
Filling the world with momentary glow,  
And wasting out afar. 'T will soon be past,  
And you will then have spent a century's light  
In one huge conflagration; and the dark  
Will gather o'er the earth. 'Tis true that Rome  
Would make a royal blaze; and yet withhold  
The torch of Nero: let those glorious towers  
Flash back the sunshine for a million years,  
Making a luminous circle on the earth  
Amid the darkness. This phosphoric life  
Unwasting gives its own effulgence forth  
Incessantly. Why this disastrous meddling  
That seeks to end it in a transient blaze  
Of violent glory? Let it still continue  
To send the radiance of its nature forth  
In luminous thoughts, each one a little flame,  
Caught midway in its flight and frozen there  
By spell of more than magic potency.

4<sup>th</sup> S. What would yourself with Nirus? Do  
you wish

That he shall be our poet, not our king?

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And would he thus escape? Would he the less  
Stoop to our service, or the less be spent  
For our delight? Shall he not be consumed,  
Being combustible? You cannot save him;  
The martyrdom of genius has involved him,  
A Titan figure for the tragic Muse  
To make her own forever.

5th S. Not a doubt  
But he is dramatic, posing night and day  
Upon the cothurns.

4th S. Let us be heroic,  
Nor flinch from all the terror. Make we now  
A tragedy of Nirus, fit for angels,  
To exalt our trivial world. In these our days  
Passion is too diffused; and half mankind  
Are grumbling abject in their peevish pangs,  
Whose throes had been most godlike, were they  
centered

In some one Titan brow. Ah, Nirus, hasten!  
Our petty tragedies are but the prelude,  
Waiting thy adolescence, till thou come  
To gather in thy one heroic bosom  
The terror and the glory of the world,  
Like Winkelreid at Sempach.

5th S. The brevity  
Of our eloquent brother, threatens once again  
To bankrupt time.

4th S. I mean not to repress  
The speech of others, nor force a hasty vote  
Ere all are heard from. This inspiring topic  
Has touched our lips with unknown eloquence,  
And filled our souls with fire. When finally  
The occasion passes, we must all subside  
To our wonted torpor. 'Twere a robbery  
Of history and art and the shining page  
Of oratoric glory to curtail

This memorable debate. Therefore I move  
Adjournment till tomorrow.

*5th S.* I desire  
To second the senator's motion.

*Pres.* Those approving  
The motion to adjourn may manifest  
Their affirmation.

*Senators.* Aye! Aye! Aye!

*Pres.* Opposed,  
The contrary response. The senate, therefore,  
Adjourns until tomorrow.

X. *Nirus.*

*Ni.* All the great dreams of youth are now  
fulfilled

In splendors multiplied. The things I wished  
Are one by one now granted at the close,  
When all have been renounced, and never more  
Can do me good, except to solemnize  
And give me inspiration. Henceforth, now,  
All outer states become mere parables,  
Mere fables with a moral.

*Cotaminus enters.*

Ah! you come

To receive my answer to my people's call.

*Co.* *Nirus*, resist that voice. The world is wild  
For mere sensation. Here's but luxury,  
And not a holy worship. Men will tire  
Of common rapture, and will find delight  
In your despairing anguish, as they now  
Find in your radiant gladness. They desire  
Uninterrupted pageantry. At last  
A tragedy alone can satiate.

They raise your seat to please themselves. Again  
'Twill suit them to down-hurl the glorious  
throne,

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In utter desolation, while they howl  
Most gleefully to see their god beneath  
Lie mangled in the ruins of his state.  
Ni. So let it be. There is no voice from heaven  
To give me guidance; let my brethren, then,  
Be prophets to me, let my soul decide  
By its own thrilling when the word is uttered.  
'Tis not a trivial pride that makes me bound  
To meet the glory; 'tis the sacred passion  
Of my own priesthood in me. If, in truth,  
An ending so disastrous must ensue,  
I shun it not; I need not lose my soul;  
And I would gladly lose all other things  
For the sake of this great glory. All things else  
One must give for it, since 'tis poetry,  
And has that penalty. Although I perish,  
Although the halo scorches whom it crowns,  
Yet I would be illumined. Even as they  
That undertook the service of the cross  
Must lose all joy, and sacrifice for aye  
The hope of love, and all the world's delight,  
So every soul that serves humanity  
On any nobler plane must undergo  
Such discipline as turns away all hope  
Of aught except the sacred offices  
Of that high mission. He must be a ruin,  
With desolation looking from his eyes,  
Where hope once shone, and human eagerness;  
And I do wish that I were such a ruin,  
With poets gathered round me solemnly,  
And wandering harpers hymning at the shrines;  
That all the petty world-utility  
Were gone from me, and I were consecrated  
In poetry's perpetual holiday,  
As Rome's great ruins, which now, Caesar-like,  
Their history complete, are glorified,

No longer mundane, but ethereal..

Ah! I invite the terror; I accept.

Co. Shall I return that answer, then?

Ni.

Ah, yes!

I fervently accept. [*Exit Cotaminus.*]

Ha! savage glory, kinghood's passion fierce,

Primeval flame, demonic ecstasy!

Exultant feel I now within my veins

Thy splendid tumult, which I fondly fancied

Was all refined away. Thou heaven-sent spark

Of diabolic force, thou perilous,

Fierce benefaction, I surrender me

To all thy matchless riot. Make me now

One conflagration of divine ambition,

To overawe the ages. Lo! where stands

This virgin empire, waiting tremulous

The sweet subjection. Let her not repent

Ere every vein be filled with me, and she, .

A wild Bacchante, lose forevermore

Her own identity to form with me

A rich, imperial world. Cotaminus

Shall be my chief adviser, born and bred

For second in the empire. Were I now

Utopia's monarch, I might choose, indeed,

A man more spiritual, more scrupulous,

And less unfeeling. Ruling here on earth,

I choose an earth-born minister, whose con-  
science

Knows but one precept, to maintain the honor

Of his own sagacity, by utterance,

Blunt and straightforward, of the visions seen

By that clairvoyant foresight. He and I

Shall each to each supply deficiency,

Making a unit. Ah, Cotaminus!

*Cotaminus enters, accompanied by the Sen-  
ate, and a Multitude.*

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Co. [*to the people.*] When we have done, sing  
the prophetic song

Of Nirus in his youth.—Nirus, our chief,  
The Senate and the people here attend  
To make you emperor of our triple realm.  
The people choose you, and the people's senate  
Give you this crown. We that were sovereign  
once

Are in your power. The state has chosen freely,  
But having chosen she can not revoke  
Her solemn choice. You are selected now  
For better or for worse. Be merciful,  
And make us happy. Let your lofty mind  
Pierce ray-like into every lowliest home,  
And brighten kindred features till their glance  
Meet in new fervor. Let your skeptic justice  
Temper our over-passionate devoutness,  
And interpose protection to us all,  
One from another. Now defend us all,  
And yet restrain us. We are full of hope,  
And look to see a long and glorious reign.  
The monarch who so sits upon the throne,  
And wields the scepter so, so wears the crown,  
Is God's anointed, and by right divine  
Assumes the majesty, waving aside  
All imbecile throne-fillers in his way,  
To bring back royal dignity once more.  
Our late republic was the regency  
That gladly gave the power up to you  
When the time came. When such a man appears,  
New dynasties begin, and history  
Takes a new start. Peasants that otherwise  
Would only grovel worm-like in the furrows,  
Or grow as weeds, impoverishing the soil,  
Tower grandly up to glorify the earth,  
Touched by that majesty. How great our lot,

To see time young, and watch the heroes spring  
At the magic voice of genius, from the dust,  
And strive together in voluptuous death,  
Ecstatic with their own mortality,  
Until that glorious passion calms itself,  
And hymning peace descends upon mankind,  
And earth is fruitful with illustrious lives!  
Not warriors only, but exalted seers  
Will come from out the circle of great souls,  
Attracted by such deeds. The earth will be  
A gathering-place for lofty natures now,  
And thou shalt be their august emperor.

Ni. In her presence!—Sincerely have I tried  
To root out all importunate desires  
Of natural ambition and to choose  
My destiny dispassionately. Today  
Bewildered I accept what you bestow,  
Not knowing whether I am right or not,  
Until the issue. Should I deprecate,  
As if reluctant to your glorious call,  
I were not then sincere. So much in life  
Brings us reproach and mocks our aspiration,  
That all men yearn for honoring investments,  
For such adornments of exalted rank  
As befit the soul, and hide the calumnies  
Of temporal circumstance. How fervently,  
Taking this consecration of the state,  
I choose henceforth a briefer, sadder life  
For the sake of its glorious impulse and high  
service!

I recognize the needs of our Talinis,  
And accept her as she is, to give her strength,  
And fit her for her nobler destiny.  
I am the people's regent, and but rule  
Till they attain their growth. I wait with you  
To see the great republic of the future.



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*Song.*

I would be kingly ; I would wear a crown  
Of regal or poetical renown,  
To pour its splendor o'er my many a shame,  
Hiding me wholly in a blaze of fame.

Oh ! I would have it in the social hour,  
To flood around me in a radiant shower,  
Investing me within my neighbors' sight,  
To make me unreal, soul-like in its light.

And when I love and offer up my soul,  
Then I would have it as an aureole  
To re-enforce my poverty's disgrace,  
Helping me bear love's glory face to face.

Oh ! when I come to that terrific hour,  
I would bring something glorious as a dower,  
Concentering in my world-illumined face  
The dignity and grandeur of the race.

No groveling passion then were in my heart ;  
No bliss plebeian should I then impart ;  
An empire's transport then were mine to give,  
The centered majesty of all that live.

Bright sun of heaven, look down upon my face,  
My poor, dull form, and cover them with grace,  
Luminous from thy disk ; O sun of fame,  
Now radiate thy light and hide my shame.

*XI. Court-room. Citizens conversing.*

*1st C.*

Ah, brother, brother !

We have our hero.

*2nd C.*

You care not for the man,  
Nor show him mercy. Your hero you destroy

Without one qualm of conscience, that great soul  
Whom I, too, reverence, not a common hero  
For street-hurrahings. Though reluctantly  
I went to see him crowned, I came away  
Better for that great vision. Wonderful  
Even to the eye is Nirus. His great presence  
Is stately as an oak of centuries,  
As all-embracing as a banyan-tree  
That shelters armies. He is of the spirits  
That make earth great among the circling orbs  
Of radiant star-worlds. Glorious despotism  
To take a feeble people from themselves,  
And make them conquerors of all the world,  
Lords of all history. Though the childish mob  
May fickle pass the most exalted by,  
And choose a pygmy for their guardian,  
'Tis not so this time. He that they have crowned  
Is more than great.

*1st C.* Ah; I could not attend,  
And all my life 'twill be my deep regret  
That I have missed it.

*2nd C.* Well, indeed, it may.  
Yet one ill omen startled all the throng,  
The haggard Phinon crouching in the rear,  
His face distorted with despair and hate,  
Looking like Nirus's degenerate ghost,  
Like a fiendish, grinning skeleton of Nirus,  
Renounced by the virtuous soul.

*1st C.* Why did you speak  
Of killing Nirus?

*2nd C.* Look but in his face,  
A countenance where delicacy and strength  
Alternately prevail, as diamonds  
In scintillating give forth different hues  
To perplex beholders. Surely that rare nature  
Was never meant to rule material things,

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Nor yet be governed by them. His true realm  
Is in the world of thought. When you dis-  
covered

That we had such a spirit in our midst,  
Why did you put it to so harsh a service?  
Already he declines.

*Cotaminus enters.*

*Co.* You spoke of Nirus?  
His load is hard to bear, harder for him,  
Because he ever bears it all himself,  
Nor shares it with the fates. Whate'er he do,  
He blames his execution. Though his acts  
Are resolute and single, rarely wrong,  
Marred only by the necessary flaws  
In his material, still he has no peace  
Seeing the work imperfect.

*3rd C.* The diplomat  
Is off his guard. What miracle at length  
Has loosed the padlocked tongue?

*4th C.* Intoxication  
At a rival's downfall.

*3d C.* Hush, you heretic!  
Incipient treason!

*4th C.* Hark, then, to the chit-chat!

*1st C.* And full of inspiration,—this great man  
Blessing the world with genius so exalted,  
Yet tortured so with doubt and self-distrust  
On his lonely height. Seeing the perfect work,  
We cannot know that it has given a pang  
To him that wrought it: yet, while we extol,  
He hears not for the pain. Ah! 'tis a sight  
Far too sublime for pathos. He is too godlike  
For a creature's pity. He agonizes there  
Upon the cross, while mortals such as we  
Worship below in rapture! Ah! our Nirus,  
We have thee in the snare! Seldom, indeed,

In boundless time hath Nature's skill succeeded  
In dropping thus her net of matter down  
Upon a full-grown angel, holding him fast  
For all the world's embraces, as we wrestle  
Like Israels with a captive Gabriel,  
All glorified with that pure spirit's anguish.

2nd C. Yet still he triumphs. Though the flesh  
confines

And tortures him, how he transfigures that  
Until he renders it a gloriole!

1st C. His was a sordid family; and coarse  
His first associates; yet out of them  
He grew to nobleness. At first I saw him,  
A new soul in a ravening world, all round,  
Objects adapted to degrade each sense,  
Perverting it to evil; natures fiendish  
Born to corrupt him, waiting his arrival,  
Fluent in language of the human heart  
For the purpose of seducing. In food and drink,  
In the very air was poison. Satan was ready,  
Ready at the very cradle-side to breathe  
In blasphemy the names of God and love,  
Before religion breathed them in a prayer.  
He would be lost if some one did not hasten  
To warn him and watch over him and guide.  
I sought him like a lover, sued in vain  
To win his confidence. I was repulsed,  
Not with unkindness, but with deep reserve,  
Not to be passed. His lot was solitude,  
Inviolable shrine; and I, the officious one,  
Was quite excluded. Nirus remains today  
Still weird and solitary, awing all  
With grandeur of his timid, calm reserve,  
Yet not now inaccessible; he lives  
In solitude, but such a solitude  
As that of priests to whom all souls may come

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That stand in need of solace. Still he lives  
 Without adviser, without comforter,  
 Still his own monitor; but now at last  
 I can approach him in his exaltation  
 Whose lowliness repulsed me. Not at ease  
 Was he with men, so long as they appeared  
 To be his equals; now does he become  
 Sweetest of friends, less haughty than in youth  
 When he was poor and humble. He has risen  
 To this position without bending once  
 To court the world; but having reached at last  
 The pinnacle whence he can bend himself  
 Nor seem a servitor, relaxing now  
 All his rigidity, he does not shrink  
 From stooping in kindness.

*2nd C.* Ah! Cotaminus,  
 What is this genius that so quickly dwarfs  
 Your old nobility, and humbles kings  
 To eagerest subjection? When you pay  
 These reverent tributes to plebeian genius,  
 You seem to me to weaken the position  
 Of aristocracy, advantaging  
 The democratic heresy.

*Co.* Ah, no!  
 We all acknowledge the exalted genius  
 As true aristocrat; for he unites  
 His separate ancestors within himself  
 To form a house. Richly inheriting  
 The qualities intense of all his fathers,  
 He attains thereby to greatness. Thus in him  
 These separate ancestors have been combined  
 Into an ancestry. By some divine,  
 Miraculous primogeniture, he joins  
 All the attainments of his sires. He gives  
 His family a history, and so  
 Fully ennobles it. He demonstrates

The greatness of his house by uttering  
 Its latent powers, a race wherein was gathered  
 Great passion unappeased, and hidden sin,  
 And silent penitence, and woman's tears  
 And yearnings, and sad youth's crushed aspira-  
 tions,

And crazed despair. All these accumulate  
 Until no longer they can be restrained,  
 Breaking forth some dread moment suddenly  
 In mortal convulsions of one agonized,  
 One grand, disastrous, brief and lawless life  
 That scorches earth with fertilizing lava,  
 And then subsides in fearful calm and silence  
 Amid the awe of men.

1st C. Ah! rightly, judge,  
 You apprehend the character of genius,  
 That glorious affliction; you perceive  
 Its mission to the past, its ministry  
 Of uttering impassioned centuries  
 In Sabbath melody. Thus common hearts  
 Record their lonely lives. Though lacking  
 speech

For adequate expression of their thought,  
 And for perpetuation of the feelings  
 That oftentimes appear through wistful eyes,  
 They yet combine and concentrate themselves  
 Now and then in one scarce embodied voice,  
 A voice that is a cry, a raving voice,  
 All inconsistent from promiscuous,  
 Importunate nerve-impulses that sweep  
 In floods from generations long-repressed  
 To find an utterance. In that voice we hear  
 The broken-hearted moanings of pure youths  
 Who, yearning high, were crushed so low. We  
 hear

The sacred prayers of woman's heart for love

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And home and rest. We hear the hopeless sobs  
Of wives that woke from dreams of maidenhood  
To find themselves profaned, still desolate,  
Denied all sympathy, still all unworshiped.  
We hear their groans that sinned in ignorance  
Or in some moment of delirium  
Made their whole future hopeless. Ah! we hear  
All the excess and hope and piety  
Of all the dumb, unnoticed generations.  
*Co.* In this voice all these speak. The genius  
differs

From common men only because in him  
Develop those hereditary germs  
Latent in other natures. He is an heir  
Completer of his ancestors. In him  
The deep past culminates. A family,  
Able no longer to endure the stress  
Of its great passions, finds an outlet thus,  
In tumult brief, until at last exhausted  
It sinks again to mediocrity,  
Peaceful and healthy.

*2nd C.* These great histories  
To us that share their eras are the chief  
Of all our inspirations.

*1st C.* Yes; to Nirus  
I owe my latest and my loftiest thoughts,  
As many younger men to that same source  
Can trace their nature's whole development.  
I heard the lyric morning of his life,  
A humble, unobtrusive melody,  
Unnoticed, save for nearness, 'mid the roar  
Of worldly noises, 'mid the thunderous rage  
Of vengeful cannon, 'mid the shrieking death  
Of raving monarchs, or the glorious burst  
Of royal wedding oratorios.  
Humble the lyric music of his youth,

That low, sweet music, only now and then  
Distinguished by its nearness in the crash  
Of more obtrusive sounds. Yet year by year  
That life's harmonious meter drew more heed  
From every high-souled listener, every year  
Grew sweeter, stronger, fuller and more dread  
With meaning transcendental, till at last  
It burst in tragic chords of joy and pain  
Filling the utmost concave.

*Victor enters, in Melno's custody.*

*Mel.* I'm in luck.

I never caged so big a bird before.

I would as lief arrest a general

As any other man that you can show me.

Justice should not discriminate for rank.

*3rd C.* Victor a murderer? Impossible!

*2nd C.* Nay, I am not surprised. I always  
looked

For some black revelation in his life:

He was so silent. These deep, reticent men,

Who hear not when addressed, and quickly tire

Of courteous conversation,—men like him

Are gathering in their bosoms storms of passion

To break in a fearful tempest.

*The Court assembles.*

*Co.* Victor, the sentence,

The solemn sentence of the outraged law

Awaits you now. All justice has been done;

You have had counsel, witness, open trial,

And our good wishes for your vindication.

If you have aught to say now at the end

That privilege is granted.

*Mel.* Go on, judge;

He's mum as an oyster.

*Co.* Let us, then, proceed;

When men of fame and popularity



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Commit great crimes, how seldom they are  
brought

To retribution! For no soul suspects,  
And few are willing to suspect their heroes;  
Few dare to risk the enmity of power,  
And all desire its favor; even law  
When great men are accused, will suddenly  
Begin to tangle, failing of its purpose,  
Till some convenient technical device  
Closes the trial. So we score a triumph  
In bringing this offender to account,  
Despite his famous name. No proof of guilt  
Could be more satisfying. Proof was brought  
Of an early feud. True, they were reconciled;  
A marriage following made the foemen brothers,  
Till the quarrel seemed forgotten; but alas!  
How long hate smoulders! It was proved again  
That Victor on the evening of the murder  
Was seen by many following stealthily  
His brother-in-law. His conduct was suspicious  
After the deed. Moreover, if in truth  
We were assured that he had quite given up  
That ancient enmity, there still would be  
Good reason for suspicion; in some freak  
The actor left the theater attired  
As in the play, disguised to represent  
The emperor himself; and so perhaps  
Victor might think it Phinon, toward whom  
'Tis known he had a grudge. Nor were it  
strange

If such a fierce ambition as 'tis known  
Victor possesses had impelled him even  
To assail the Empire's head. We all remember  
That Victor heard ungraciously the plan  
Of our new polity. We know besides  
That claiming kinship with our banished tyrants

He long upheld their cause. Nor is this all:  
 Two witnesses beheld the very act,  
 And watched him leave the spot. I cannot think,  
 As some aver, that rivals have conspired  
 To ruin Victor with a perjury  
 So daring and elaborate. 'Tis true  
 That some who helped on Victor's prosecution  
 Were his bitter foes; so much the better this  
 For the cause of justice. Pray, how otherwise  
 Would civic prudence venture to oppose  
 The second of the Empire? This we know,  
 That men of worth and standing have been here  
 Among the witnesses—most upright men  
 Whose word was ne'er impeached. No fear have

I

But justice has been done. Shall I, the judge,  
 Shrink from my duty, and permit this crime  
 To pass without its meed? Slight cause for  
 wonder.

That men grow fierce pursuing this deed,—

*Mel.*

That's me!

*Co.* All feeling in their own unshielded flesh  
 The next knife-thrust! Is some one ever plotting

Your death and mine? And whose turn next?  
 Who dreamed

Of such a deed by Victor? Dare we trust  
 Our children or parents or our cradle-mates,  
 Or our wedded consorts? Will they not arise  
 And stab us in our sleep? To him I sentence  
 I will not use harsh words. 'Tis hard, I know.  
 To hold back from our fundamental dust.  
 What constant strain to keep up in the heart  
 Our forced soul-animation! But alas!  
 That he who now has fallen should be of all  
 Most noted for his piety. Henceforth

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Will men not feel that they are only mocked  
By those who call upon the name of God?  
They will judge the hidden souls of men devout  
By this soul now revealed. In justice' name,  
In the name of mercy, in religion's name,  
By the Empire's laws, Victor, I sentence you  
To die the death.

### *XII. Nirus.*

*Ni.* Ah! even our virtue grows monotonous.  
For man no peace, no triumph. Each success  
Is but an opportunity. Each triumph  
As soon as won grows commonplace. We stand  
With *feet* upon the field of victory,  
And find it tedious-stable. Underneath us  
Lie all our conquests, and we cannot feel  
A glory in them. The imperial robe  
Is cheap to him that wears it.

*Mira enters.*

Mira, my friend!

*Mi.* Oh! do you think it possible for Victor  
To have done this deed? He is as pure of hate  
As God's archangels. And he loved my brother  
And mourned his death. Oh! how can you  
conceive

That one so god-like thoughtful could descend  
To brutal hatred?

*Ni.*

Phinon! Ah! he fell;

Who else is safe?

*Mi.*

So Victor is to die,  
My brother dead already, murdered both,—  
All Phinon's work. You saved me from him  
once;

Will you not save my husband, and save me  
From his revenge, who bribed the witnesses,  
And roused their brutal jealousy of Victor,

Because, though recent on the popular side,  
He stood most high in favor? Are you, too,  
Jealous like them, fearing his rivalry?

Ni. My dearest lady, honored of Talinis,  
I cannot think that question was sincere.

Mi. The people all love Victor; they'll sustain  
you

In his release; 'twill make your power secure.

Ni. I am no politician, and I choose  
Rather to lose my throne than pardon Victor  
Against my sense of right.

*Cotaminus enters.*

Mi. You'll not permit  
A deed so brutal. Not even tearless justice  
Could be so heartless. How were it possible  
For any gentle will to give consent  
To deed so hideous?

Co. With a gentle nature  
We must needs be gentle; but when man com-  
mits

Some act of brutal cruelty, we all  
Can easily be harsh and pitiless  
Dealing with him.

Ni. Cotaminus, my friend!  
[Exit Cotaminus.]

Mi. O God, how frightful! He is more gentle  
far,

More sensitive than I. If such a fate  
Is meet for him, pray, what can you devise  
More horrible for me? Oh! I deserve  
Less tenderness than Victor.

Ni. Noble Mira,  
I will not strive to justify myself  
By mocking your loyal faith. Yet I change the  
sentence  
To imprisonment for life.

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*Mi.* And must I thank you  
For cruelty like this? Ah, do your will!  
Lock us in separate cells, till life that else  
Were glad and useful loses for us both  
All worth and gladness. Yet can you imagine  
That you will ever lock us up so close,  
Though in the very center of the earth,  
That we can not escape? Seeking our cells  
Some day you'll find your passive victims gone,  
The doors secure as ever, and within  
Only a pale resemblance of us left,  
Mere shadows without life. So will you know  
That we are fled from all your cruelty;  
And you must own how hideous a deed  
You have been doing.

*Ni.* Your woes oppress me, *Mira*;  
I bear your burdens; is the load for you  
Not therefore any lighter? Go home, *Mira*,  
And find a comfort in this milder doom.  
We will not desecrate the noble love  
Of such a woman; never violent hand  
Shall touch the man loved thus.

*Mi.* Go home, you say?  
Go home to whom? My husband? Or my chil-  
dren?

God pity me! You make me comfortless  
And desolate for life. [*Exit.*]

*Ni.* Was ever soul  
Yet so uplifted that it did not need  
Some other soul to warm it, perishing  
For lack of such a comfort? Through this exile  
I am still honored like the king that rules  
The isle of lepers, or like him that holds  
His fearful sovereignty over Purgatory.  
Would I might be a little householder  
In some love-gladdened cottage by the sea,

Where ease and duty might together dwell,  
And high ambition might not lose its grace,  
Translated to the clumsy speech of action.  
Then might my face wear freely its full love,  
Not masked in frowns, the slave of ugly justice.

Would I might be a scholar o'er his books,  
Bearing amid his studious dignity  
A ceaseless benediction. In the sage,  
Only in the sage is mercy absolute,  
Flooding the features; in the magistrate  
'Tis but a pitying radiance to render  
The brow of Justice less unbearable,  
Adding a priesthood to the headsman's office.  
Men think me cold. They do not dream what  
pain

I find in this stern office. They know not  
That when one towers above the heads of men,  
As rugged as a mountain, and as still,  
'Tis but the surging passions in his breast  
That swell amain and hurl him to that height.  
Nor let him be so unheroical,  
So inaccordant with his kingly state,  
As to spurn this glory. Let him tower in gloom,  
And bear the freezing snows upon his brow,  
And feel the prisoned fire within his heart,  
Rather than miss this diadem of stars,  
Or lose his function of condensing ever  
All nature's blessings into prosperous clouds  
To pour in showers upon the homes of men.  
Oh! I am never hesitant to choose  
To have missed the dear companionship of Ena,  
And even God's paternal realness,  
Rather than choose to miss my heroship.

*XIII. Victor's Cell. Victor, Mira, Melno.*

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*Vic.* Ah! Mira, if your child had only lived  
I might be comforted; for I could hope  
That you would not be wholly desolate  
The rest of life.

*Mi.* The little creature breathed,  
Just drew a tender breath; then I was childless,  
And desolate indeed.

*Vic.* I would my birth  
Had been so fortunate. O Mira, Mira!  
How many deeds I promised you to do,  
Surpassing common men, bringing the world  
To prove it with applause. That promise, now,  
Too rashly given, I repudiate,  
A crestfallen braggart; for my brother-men  
Forbid me to be noble; from a king  
They change me to a cobbler. So behold,  
I'm nothing but a cobbler; and my work  
Is mocked at by the fellows of my shame,  
The loathsome human vermin.

*Mi.* Victor, my love,  
We'll end this shameful wrong; the world shall  
know

That every honor which you won is vile,  
And you and I despise it, 'tis so base  
Compared with your exalted destiny,  
With all your inner greatness, and the fame  
That you must yet achieve.

*Vic.* If I had marble,  
After long years of pain and disappointment,  
I could work my soul's conceptions out of that,  
Contriving still to give embodiment  
To what is in me, though the plastic globe  
Were kept from my impassioned hand. But now  
What fine ideal may a plowman's shoe  
Serve to embody? What is a regal mind  
Without material? Go, Mira, go;

I am no more thy husband ; I am a cobbler.

*Mi.* O my poor Victor, my sweet love, is love  
So little tender that 'tis thus profaned  
With these un pitying indignities?

*Vic.* Were I a poet, I might live my life,  
Defying every hindrance. But alas!

I am not independent like the poet,  
Able to weave bright phantasms in mid air.  
Like an unpeopled, undiscovered world  
Useless must I remain. I cannot live  
For centuries, until these prison-walls  
Crumble around me, letting me go free  
To renew my task. My opportunity  
Is fleeting swift ; and he that otherwise,  
With unencumbered hand, had swayed the globe  
Must hide himself in a mere crevice of it,  
Made mortal by disappointment.

*Mi.* Hope we ! sorrow,  
Sorrow and death make spirits of us all.

*Vic.* I dread not, Mira, to lose the sense of life,  
But to live thus, feeling the sacredness  
Of life profaned within me, unennobled  
With lofty effort. On the field of war  
To die mightily, that were indeed divine ;  
Let me not live on thus.

*Mi.* The regal nature  
Shall not be silenced till its will be published  
To the bounds of the solar system ; and that will,  
When known at last, is sure to be obeyed  
Though Alps obstruct. Will not all creatures  
know,

Through all disguise, their rightful sovereign,  
And be obedient all ? Through them at large  
He will accomplish what, restrained of body,  
He cannot do himself. 'Tis sovereignty  
To do by others what can not be done



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Without the aid of others. Do not fear;  
The noble principles of government  
That you have championed will yet prevail,  
Though you are kept from action.

### ACT FIFTH.

*I. Jail. Victor, Mira, Melno.*

*Mi.* Farewell, Victor!

*Vic.* Mira, Mira! come back! Will you call her?  
*Mira!*

*Melno goes out, and returns with Mira.*

Why came you not?

*Mi.* I heard not.

*Vic.* Did not hear?

How could you help? 'Tis likelier far, I fancy,  
You did not wish to hear. So eager were you  
To reach the freer air? Ha! one would think  
A wife might linger here so brief a time,  
And then go out among the flowers and trees,  
And feel no hardship.

*Mi.* Dearest, have I not pleaded  
To share your cell? And though forbidden this,  
Am I not still a prisoner? I leave not  
My cheerless room except to visit you;  
And on the dreary way I never see  
Either the trees or flowers. I only think  
Of your great misery, and our ruined hope,  
Till scarcely can I find my way for tears.

*Vic.* They have at last their will, who put me  
here,

Wishing to see me grovel. I am fallen,  
Am fallen indeed, to speak thus unto Mira,  
My queen and saint.

*Mi.* Victor, my king of men,  
My hero on whose head the great world's wrath

Has fallen so fierce, how patient you have been!  
How good and gentle! You have been trium-  
phant,

And are and will be! Do not weep, my love;  
Or if thou wilt anoint my bosom now  
With these thy tears. Let me sit close beside  
thee,

And be a comfort to thee. What shall I do?  
Shall I not sing?

*Vic.* Yes; sing, dear, if you like,—

Anything, Mira, so I have your presence.

*Mi.* [*Sings.*

Not for me the strong endeavor;  
Not for me the civic worth;  
Not for me the mighty lever  
That shall heave the balanced earth;

Not for me the royal duty  
With its gloriole of pain;  
Not for me the dreadful beauty  
Of the Age's martial train;

Not for me the trumpet sounding;  
Not for me the clarion tone;  
How all other hearts are bounding!  
I am silent here alone.

We, the weary, worn, and dying,  
Are released from every care;  
In the quiet shadow lying,  
All our duty is to bear.

*Vic.* O poets who are living on the earth,  
Or who are absent from it, were it sweet  
To know the good that ye have done to Victor?  
The tearful thanks of one whose heart is touched  
Are far more precious than the cold applause

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Of the careless multitude. With tears I bless  
you

Who soothe the dying anguish of my life,  
And take away my shame, and make me feel  
A soul's true dignity.

*Mi.* O Victor, Victor,  
I would that Nirus had remained a poet,  
Breathing these boons of rhythmic sympathy,  
Like embraces of pity. How he now descends  
To let himself be made an instrument  
Of jealous politicians! Oh! I feel  
The air is not so bracing, and the stars  
Not so ethereal since our poet fell,  
Ceasing to bless us with those songs devout  
That I and Ena waited eagerly  
And sang together, giving glad response  
With our own pulse-beat to each sacred throb  
Of the noble poet's heart. We sang no songs  
But those of Nirus. Was 't Nirus that she loved,  
Dying of grief that she had given her word  
Unto another, and could not withdraw  
Her hand from Phinon's and devote her life  
In cloistered secrecy before the shrine  
Of this high, unattainable poet-nature?  
But I, the while we sang, thought but of Victor.  
Each sacred rhythmic prayer made vivid  
Great Victor's noble image. Ah! I too  
Aspired to glories inaccessible;  
And I had died, too, had not Victor come,  
Exalting me even to this peerless state  
Of Victor's wife.

*Mel.* Well, now, it's time for me  
To eat my dinner, and for Victor here  
To go to work. The last shoes that you made,  
Victor, were worst of all. You have required  
So many years to learn your trade, and still

Do not yet know it? Great men soon are tested,  
When they have to earn their bread.

*II. The Jail. Melno and Mira at the Cell-door. Victor within.*

*Vic.* O Mira, Mira, I had never thought  
That you would doubt.

*Mi.* I doubt not. This being true,  
What care you for the injustice of the world?

*Vic.* You do believe me guilty; I detect it  
In your face and actions. Not one friend is  
left me

In all this brutal world.

*Mi.* My dearest husband,  
What cruel enchantment of our enemies  
Has roused this fancy? I indeed mistrust  
All but my God and Victor; but these two  
I trust with equal faith.

*Vic.* You shall be gone;  
The blood of kings is flowing in my veins,  
And I will not submit to ignominy.

*[Cell-door closed. Exit Melno.]*

*Mi.* Ah, Victor! I have lost thee for awhile,  
But not forever. Patient will I wait  
To the end of time. I love, I love, I love,  
Nor have ever loved before! Sorrow and joy  
Are love's two passionate arms, and mighty  
indeed

Is their embrace. I love, I love, I love!  
When he we love has lost the power to bless,  
When comes disease with all its peevishness,  
When pain wrings harsh words from once tender  
lips,

Then, then is love's high triumph; then we prove  
That love is no luxurious epicure,  
But an angelic minister. Ah! now

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I prove this passion spirit-like and pure,  
 Not sensual. My love is justified,  
 Wearing the martyr crown. Victor, my love  
 Was worthy of thy worth. Thy youthful glory -  
 Finer, indeed, and sweeter than the breath  
 Of loveliest dewy flowers, attracted Mira,  
 Yet could not of itself have won her heart  
 Or gained her hand. Only thy lofty spirit  
 Subdued her to this lowliness of love  
 That worships at a prison or a tomb,  
 Untempted of delight. Ah! if thy mind  
 At last hath failed thee, and thy presence dear  
 Is taken from me, I'll still wait beside thee,  
 Nor be impatient till the hour of doom,  
 Faithful forevermore, till in some bath  
 Of liquid stars far off from this poor earth  
 Thou art restored, and turning unto Mira,  
 As one that wakes from dreaming, thou dost find  
 That I am close beside thee, watching true,  
 Keeping myself all virgin for thy love,  
 Ready to give thee my unsullied hand  
 To renew the journey together. If thou sleep,  
 I will lie down beside thee in the tomb;  
 And if I wake first, I will watch thy slumber  
 And wait till thou art ready to go with me,  
 Ere I depart. I will stay there forever,  
 Rather than go without thee. Ah, indeed  
 I will be patient! patience is woman's valor.

*III. Before the Cell. Melno and Mira.*

*Mi.* May I see Victor now?

*Mel.* Of course you may.

You see the door is open; just go in,  
 You may see him if you wish; but you will find  
 He'll not talk much today.

*Mi.* Why will he not?

*Mel.* Because you'll find he's dead. He killed  
himself

This morning with a knife. He could not bear  
The torments of his guilt. I felt quite sure  
The law was right. Poor man! This proves his  
crime

Beyond a doubt. Go in, why don't you? See,  
The door is open. What's the matter? Woman,  
Why are you standing there? What ails the  
gypsy

That she doesn't budge? Lady, I'm very sorry,  
I'm sorry that it happened; but such things  
Must happen in our world; we all must die.  
Death is a common thing; so never mind.  
Cheer up, good woman, God is merciful,  
And who can tell but he may find some means  
To save your husband yet, and cleanse away  
This dreadful crime. She doesn't know a thing,  
No more than he does. Annat, Annat, Annat!  
Do run and fetch a doctor and a priest,  
Both of them, mind. I don't know which she  
needs.

Poor woman! She shall have the finest broth  
That my good wife can make.

*IV. Nirus, Cotaminus and other Ministers.  
Melno. Mira enters.*

*Mi.* One, one more niche must now, must now  
be filled

Of this sepulchral globe, and one more void  
Be left responsive in a human heart.  
Oh, they are heartless! They are murderers,  
Who triumph in my woe. Even when I ask  
Only to have his cell the little while  
That I remain on earth, they drive me forth  
From that dear refuge. Think they I am worthy

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Of a happier life than Victor's? I would live  
 As he has lived so long. If they refuse,  
 I can at least die such a death as Victor's.  
 Were it not a crime for me to live on still,  
 Happy and free after his piteous fate?  
*Mel.* Poor thing! She need not have a fear that

she  
 Will ever be happy.

*[Mira goes out, and then re-enters.]*

*Mi.* O self-abandoned Nirus,  
 You have not yet been tried. The time will  
 come,

When, in the battle's roar, with deadly foes  
 Thronging around you, and the ill-got power  
 Fast slipping from you, you will find at last  
 How weak a thing you are. Then will you long  
 For Victor's coolness and sagacity  
 To be your guidance. You will call on Victor,  
 And hearing not his footstep's quick approach,  
 You will be panic-stricken, and will die  
 A craven's death, vain suppliant for mercy.

*[Goes out and then re-enters.]*

*Co.* Shall we have the woman ejected?

*Mel.* Speak the word,  
 And I'll not shirk my duty.

*Ni.* Suggest it not.

I and my empire are at Mira's beck,  
 Assuring her protection wheresoe'er  
 She wander in her sorrow and distraction.

*Mi.* Now he is dead; he is removed at last,  
 And cannot harm you. Now will you admit  
 That he was guiltless? Be less cruel, Nirus,  
 And tell me you believe him innocent.

*Ni.* Noble woman, unhappiest of wives,  
 I cannot say it. Comfort come to Mira!  
 And all rewards of loyalty and love

Bless her forever!

*Mi.* You know not of love,  
Or you would be less heartless. Woman's grief  
Moves not your lone and loveless desolation.  
I ask no more of him, but turn to you [*to 2nd*

*minister*

Was Victor guilty?

*2nd M.* Honored of womanhood,  
For your sake I am willing to forget  
That he was guilty.

*Mi.* Oh! the emperor  
Gave you the cue. What else could you have  
said

Without some taint of treason? You, at least,  
[*to 3rd minister*

Have independence. Was he not innocent?

*3rd M.* He was not guiltless; but your lofty  
faith

Shall be his absolution unto us  
And unto heaven.

*Mi.* You are a courtier, too.  
O Israel, do you believe him guilty?

*4th M.* Poor woman, I have never dared to say  
That any man is guilty.

*Mi.* Oh, once more!

*4th M.* It may be he was innocent.

*Mi.* Thank God!

I knew the tide would turn. O noble Jew,  
Let me kiss your hand! God bless you! I'm so  
glad

That I have lived for this! They pity me;  
But you have given me comfort. Have you chil-  
dren?

*4th M.* I have none living.

*Mi.* Ah, I am so sorry!  
I have no children, either. Nirus there



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Has sentenced me to childlessness forever,  
Thinking I'd not be good at rearing courtiers.  
You and I have no children. If we had,  
If we had children, we could teach to them  
That Victor was not guilty, till the world  
Would sometime be converted. Yet we two  
Will spend our lives in doing this good work,  
Till all acquit him, and this emperor,  
This atheist, who knows not love or pity  
Becomes the execration of mankind. [*Exit.*]  
*Ni.* Only a hangman! Is this the kingly glory  
That lured my youth?

*Mi.* [*Without—sings.*]

Under a hillock green  
A wild bird's tiny nest,  
And the white little eggs in hope serene,  
And the mother's downy breast.

Above, the encircling sky,  
Now smiling, and now a-frown;  
And the glorious suns, and the vision high  
Of starlight streaming down.

Under the hillock green  
The tiny wild-bird's nest,  
And the white little eggs in hope serene,  
And the downy mother's breast.

*Ni.* Alas! I feel  
That I have been dethroned; the diadem  
Of poesy that rested on my brow  
Is gone, is gone for aye! Is't well, I wonder,  
Is't well to lose all beauty and delight  
From out our vision to be made a part  
Of the world's joy and beauty? To lose God  
From out our contemplation as we sink  
More near his soul, identified with the eye

That seeth not itself?

*Mel.* Just what I say

To Myron over our bumpers.

*Ni.* Melno, peace!

You thrust yourself in to no purpose.

*Mel.* I keep forgetting.

I must be more careful.

*A masked Assassin entering aims a pistol at Nirus. Melno rushing between is fatally wounded. The Assassin escapes.*

*Co.* Nirus, that woman's work.

*Ni.* Yes; but molest her not.

*Mel.* O sir, are you safe?

*Ni.* I am saved, my deliverer!

*Mel.* Then I die happy!

*Co.* He tries

To continue.

*Mel.* Did I—

*Ni.* Yes, Melno.

*Mel.* Did I—

*Ni.* I hearken

*Mel.* Did I thrust myself in to some purpose?

*Ni.* My hero of heroes!

*V.—Death-bed of Cotaminus. Nirus and Ministers.*

*Co.* My emperor, I die.

*Ni.* Honored and loved,

Farewell, farewell!

*Co.* I have served you faithfully.

*Ni.* My worthy friend, you have in truth been faithful,

Faithful and honest, diligent and earnest,

As such a calm and peaceful death confirms.

He that has not yet died a death like this

Has not yet reached the crown of life. This death

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Completes the symmetry of a pure career.

*Co.* And I am to die tonight! Will 't not seem  
strange

For me to lie on past the dawn, nor rise  
To do the morrow's duties? Ah! I feel,  
In these last moments, all appendages,—  
Pleasures and pains, desires and dreads and  
dreams,

Have all departed. Nothing now remains  
But mere existence, its profoundness now  
No longer lost in myriad shifting forms  
Of petty emotion. Life, the while it lasts,  
Is its own eternity. Hath not each instant  
An immortality of its own? If life  
Cannot continue always, I am glad  
To have the substitute of such a death.  
While I am living have I not all life  
That I desire? And I shall care for none  
When I am dead.

*Ni.* And is there anything  
That I can do? Anything that you wish?

*Co.* Nothing except my life; and since I know  
I cannot keep that, I bequeath it now  
To all posterity.

*Ni.* Posterity  
Will cherish it. I feel you have not reached  
The height you merited. More lofty honors  
Were waiting for you; they will come at last  
After your death.

*Co.* A dreamless sleep, indeed,  
Hath naught of pleasure; yet the luxury  
Of sinking down in sleep's delicious arms  
Compensates for the long, long, silent night,  
And makes the experience precious.

*Ni.* Ah, he is gone!  
Farewell, farewell! He spent a long career

In service of his country, and through all  
His honor ne'er was doubted. True, he lacked  
In gentle qualities, was practical,  
Nor gave high names to things, and seemed at  
times

Obtuse to some fine feelings; yet within  
His patient heart was true. [*Exit.*]

*2nd Minister.* He is deeply moved.

*3rd M.* I seldom have beheld him so affected.

*4th M.* The state has had great loss. Cotaminus  
Was always cool and thoughtful. When the rest  
Were quite disabled by excitement, he  
Continued still sagacious and serene.

*5th M.* He was the hardest worker in Talinis,  
A sober man burdened with world-wide cares.  
'Twas seldom that he smiled.

*2nd M.* He was quite free  
From self-conceit.

*4th M.* Do you not all remember  
The playful-serious eulogy of Nirus,  
Only last month? "Be yours," said he, "forever  
The canonization of common sense, of freedom  
From the vice of being good."

*5th M.* Without a doubt  
Nirus preferred him. Likely had he lived  
He would have gained the throne. Now he is  
gone,

Who will succeed in honor?

*2nd M.* Sirs, I trust  
That I shall have your influence in obtaining  
The vacant ministry.

*3rd M.* I crave your pardon.  
Methinks that post belongs of right to me.

*5th M.* Wait! I myself have claims a thousand-  
fold

Stronger than yours. But shame upon you both,

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To violate the presence of the dead,  
And the emperor's bereavement!

*2nd M.* Ha! not I  
Have caused this scene, but you that enviously  
Grudge my legitimate claims.

*6th M.* I'll go straightway  
To seek for Nirus, and appeal to him  
Against your base and covetous designs!  
[*Exeunt.*]

*VI. Battlefield on the Seashore. Two Officers conversing.*

*1st Of.* The tragedy of genius blackens now;  
The final peal is nigh.

*2nd Of.* Life is grown horror.

*1st Of.* After so great a reign, crowded so full  
With lofty deeds of peace and war, so famed  
In all the people's love, now all at once  
Society dissolves.

*2nd Of.* To manage men  
Needs a lion-tamer's nerve. Only so long  
As one can keep his eyes unwavering,  
And steadfast stand, they crouch and cringe be-  
fore him;

But let him falter or relax his gaze,  
They leap at once to his throat.

*1st Of.* Do you suppose  
That this upheaval could have been prevented  
By any human power? I cannot see  
That Nirus was at fault. From the lava-fire  
Of inner earth this earthquake took its rise,  
And might not be repressed.

*2nd Of.* Yet recently  
You know he has blundered, by one compromise  
Followers once devoted. Save for that slip  
Weakening his righteous cause, driving away

There were another chance, and this dread hour  
Would not hold all our hope.

*1st Of.* His loss of sleep,  
And abstinence from food impaired his judgment,

Till he made that sad mistake. But now at  
last

He is again himself, and he may yet  
Retrieve our fortunes.

*2nd Of.* Yes; he now has dined,  
And is once more a king. 'Tis wonderful  
How much creative genius lies concealed  
In a dish of tubers, how much royalty  
In a little bread.

*1st Of.* Not every man is able  
To turn such substance into royalty;  
His is a rare digestion.

*2nd Of.* Ah! 'tis sad  
That things so petty work so awful wreck.

When a sacred nation's fate  
Hangs upon a single creature,  
That should render him too great  
For the common needs of nature.

*Nirus enters.*

*Ni.* Ah! you were right. Had I followed your  
advice,

Earth's future now were brighter. I imagined  
That one small indirection would subserve  
Our sacred purpose. Now I realize  
I had saved the ideal end by means ideal,  
And my conscience were exultant. I preferred  
The judgment of my trusted counselor,  
The wise Cotaminus, before the dictates  
Of my own more sensitive conscience. What  
evil charm

Has made me act so madly?

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*1st Of.* Now, indeed,  
You act most madly when you risk your life,  
As you do to-day.

*2nd Of.* Our prince, we draw from you  
Our vital pulse. We would shield this heart of  
us

Lest it be pierced, and the nation's life be ended  
At a single blow.

*Ni.* A pleasant dogma, truly,  
That has made excuse for acts of cowardice  
In many a man of valor. When you desire  
That I act the craven for my country's sake,  
You ask too much. 'Tis sacrifice enough  
That I give my life. Must I yield my very  
honor,

And leave my memory ruined?

*2nd Of.* If you are brave,  
As all the world attests, what further need  
To prove yourself? It cannot be you fear  
Lest men may think you timid?

*1st Of.* If you do,  
O'ercome that fear for our dear country's sake,  
Whose fate is linked in yours.

*Ni.* Each man on earth  
Is quite superfluous, so many others  
Being ready to take his place. You'll never lack  
For men to rule you. There are everywhere  
Tough skulls to wear the crown, and patient  
limbs

To hold the hard high seat; but there are few  
Unselfish souls to render daring deeds  
And by the inspiration of example  
To multiply the valiant and the true.  
There are more princes in the world than heroes,  
And if you lose a prince to gain a hero,  
Happy is history. But will you go,

To the right wing, one—the other to the left  
And carry these instructions? [*Exeunt officers.*

O my soul,

Crucified to the body, when at last  
Will all be over and the darkness come?  
See these mad soldiers. Love to them this  
moment

Is foreign as a thought that ne'er hath stirred  
Under their shaggy breasts. In such a mood  
Would they not rend their tender wives and  
babes

Were foemen not in sight? And I, their chief,  
Calmly direct this fury I feel not,  
A cunning Mephistopheles. Indeed  
War hath no saintship; he that sheddeth blood,  
Even in the holiest cause, must ever bear,  
Must bear forever on his ruined front  
The brand of Cain. Now do the latter days  
Involve decrepit earth? Now must the lights,  
The holy lights of science be extinguished?  
The vestal fires of poesy expire,  
Leaving no spark to be renewed again,  
If better times should come? Must all our wealth,  
This long developed wisdom and devoutness,  
Must all be lost by one degenerate age,  
And earth be left to recommence its life,  
As nothing had been gained? That I have failed  
Is not my shame alone, but Nature's too.  
Nature defeated hath not lifted soul  
Above the needs of matter. Now the sun  
Seems to be burning low; and matter fails,  
And soul fails with it, and the world is lost,  
In spite of all philanthropy. Alas!  
They would not think. How could they? 'Twas  
too much  
For those poor sleepy heads. I tried to stir them,





Which kings and nobles could remember proudly  
And die defending. Thus we four would tame  
With patient effort all these savages,  
Assimilate them into citizens,  
Make them a people. Ah! were one but left me  
Of those my colleagues, I should not today  
Feel this despair. Two of these missionaries  
Have rushed in frenzy from their shrines away,  
And plunged with yells into the midst, them-  
selves

Transformed to cannibals. The third is gone,  
A manly soul, worn out before his time  
With faithful toil; and I alone am left,  
Alone on earth, surrounded every side  
With surging savage hordes. Now do I hide me,  
Forced to abandon proselyting henceforth,  
And flee for refuge. All I now desire  
Is some obscure retreat, where I may crouch  
In breathless safety, while they howl without  
And do their will. If they would all prefer  
The privilege of burning at the risk  
Of being burned, why, let them merrily  
Burn one another. Ah! too well I see  
By my resistance to their growing fury,  
I foil them now only to suffer more  
When they at last shall seize me. How the  
flood

Is rolling round me far above my head!  
Awhile the dike that I have built about me  
Will keep the waters out; but finally  
The waves will burst through all with violence  
As great as my resistance and delay.  
What is a king? His royal offices  
Make delicate his body till a peasant  
Could tear his frame like cobweb. He forgets,  
And thinks himself omnipotent. Awhile,

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With all these shouting millions gathered round,  
Praising us in a trivial caprice,  
How proud our mien! And how we lord it o'er  
them,

Not seeming to perceive at all, poor things!  
That all these crowds only amuse themselves,  
And have us in their power! How piteous  
The sight of one pale, vulnerable mortal,  
With a few poor threads of gauze half-inter-  
posed

Between his subjects and his nakedness,  
Striving to sway a people, menacing,  
Trying to fright them to obedience,  
As if not knowing they at any time  
Could rend him like a parchment! Sage or king  
May serve a savage for a barbecue,  
Valued according to the quality  
Of the flesh he yields.

*2nd Officer re-enters.*

*2nd Of.* I'm back, sir.

*Ni.* What report?

*2nd Of.* So even-balanced is our fierce en-  
counter

That e'en the artillery's sky-deafening roar  
Seems muffled in the hush of deep suspense  
Into a sort of silence.

*Ni.* Order Carn

To send a fourth toward yonder vantage-ground,  
Anticipating thus a hostile force

That now moves thitherward. [*Exit 2nd Officer.*

*Cotaminus,*

How true thy warning words! and how I  
wronged,

How I betrayed my sacred poetship

When I assumed the crown! Less frivolous  
Should I have been, if I had wreathed my brow

With simple ivy and had been content  
To write mere popular verse, though I was called  
To wear a true, high poet's crown of thorns.  
A crown of thorns I wear in very truth,  
But all without the halo. How I yearn  
To be once more the poet! Gentlest Ena,  
Once more in thy fine presence! Had I lived  
The life ideal, lived a life of peace,  
Giving myself to thought, my life had then  
Been less imposing, less adapted then  
To epic, doubtless, or to tragedy,  
But how much more exalted! 'Tis a crime  
For him that sees the ideal to degrade  
His holy priesthood, and to stain his hands  
With mere utility. Is he not bound  
To do his highest work, even though the weeds  
Grow rank about his door-step? Now I see  
I am the foolish man that built my house  
On vanities, not on the solid rock  
Of truth ideal. Ah! had I been faithful,  
And reared the sacred shrines of poesy  
Beyond the howling of the wind and wave,  
My work of life had been immortal, then,  
Not toppling headlong at the first assault  
Of temporal circumstance.

*3rd Officer enters.*

*3rd Of.* Sir, I am sent  
From the left wing to beg for speedy aid  
To check a fierce attack made by a force  
Of far superior numbers.

*Ni.* You may go  
To yonder regiment, and bid the colonel  
Hasten to bear relief. [*Exit 3rd Officer.*]

I cannot enter  
Into the battle's passion. No great thought  
Comes like an inspiration to reveal

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Clear to the end the varied combinations  
Of the day's victory. My mind is forced  
In other channels. Now philosophy,  
So long repressed, insists upon her sway  
And fills me with indifference to the issue  
Of all this noise and tumult.

*A Messenger enters.*

*Mes.* Nirus, fly!  
For you have made the interval so great  
Between you and the army that the foe  
Hem in your body-guard.

*Ni.* If they vouchsafe  
To free me from the burden of my crown,  
Even though the head go with it, I'll not  
grumble,  
I'll hail them gratefully.

*VII. Seashore. Nirus and Ministers.*

*Ni.* Ah! I had thought  
That when that ancient flood o'erwhelmed the  
world,

And from the wreck a chosen stock was saved,  
And over all appeared the iris-hues  
Of universal letters—that no more  
The race would be destroyed; yet now again  
Another Rome is deluged, and again  
Earth is a seething whirlpool. Can it be,  
When we have spent our strength, and groaning  
sunk

Into the vast abyss, that hour by hour  
The fury will subside, and peace and joy  
Return to bless the earth? Ah! hides this flood  
Religion and philosophy? And means it  
Only that these strong savages desire  
That we should civilize them? Do they force us  
To minister to them? Does the mighty instinct  
Of a noble race but seek thus frantically

To be consummated? Though they themselves  
Cannot perceive the purpose, yet within  
This monstrous body doth some soul ideal  
Yearn in the dark and impel the gross mass on  
To a richer, nobler future? Thus of yore  
In the coarse Teutons that o'erwhelmed old Rome  
Was hid the soul of Germany and England  
And freedom's prophet-land across the sea.  
Is't God, "in whom all creatures live and move  
And have their being?" Do these deluge throes  
Mean only that at last the area  
Of civilization draws now to itself  
The whole world's life? The mighty currents  
all

Hither direct themselves to be a part  
Of this our noble sea. There needs must follow  
A temporary vortex. Let the whole deep  
Commingle now its agitated flood  
With the infinite virtues of our great Talinis.  
All will be well. The ocean for a while  
Will be in perturbation; and the clouds  
Will overwhelm the sunny peace of heaven;  
Yet calm will come at last, and life again  
Will be in equilibrium. Who comes?

*Enter Officers of the hostile army.*

1st Of. Brave Nirus, we so fully trust your  
honor,

That if you only abdicate the throne,  
Confessing Rahn our God as king of kings,  
Then live henceforth in silence, you are free;  
If you refuse us, you shall meet a death  
Heroic in its anguish.

Ni.

In her presence!

If they so trust me, I will honor their trust  
By being true. Tell them I wait my death.

*[Exeunt officers.]*

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Is a king but clay for any brutal slave  
To knead into his image? Can they change me  
To any shape obscene that strikes their fancy?  
Can they really raze the summit of my brain,  
And lodge the debris in my distended neck?  
Can they slide my brow aslant, and fringe it  
with bristles?

Can they take away a cubit from my stature  
And add it to my girth? Have they not seen me?  
Do they suppose my spirit smothered up  
In gallons of lard? Do they, indeed, suppose  
me

A blear-eyed craven wretch with pipe in mouth?  
Whatever they have thought me, they shall learn  
That I am made of such material

As may be shattered, but can not be shaped,  
Yea, substance that however broken, still  
Keeps the same symmetry. An honest man  
Was never made of dust, nor will return  
Into the dust. He cannot be unmade.

*1st M.* You need not be unmade. Preserve  
yourself,

And live your life in silent dignity,  
Scorning the world too much to give it tribute  
Of bootless opposition. For the ideal  
If her champion perish, how shall he realize  
The heavenly aspiration? Were it not wisdom  
For the sake of that glorious object to abate  
A tithe of your scrupulous aim, and be content  
To approximate your purpose, achieving thus  
A tangible gain?

*Ni.* A single dying gasp  
True to ideals, free from compromise  
With low utilities, is far more precious  
Than life eternal in subservience  
To the grossness of the real,

*2nd M.* Be not rash.  
*Ni.* These knees were never made for genuflection,  
 These shoulders for yoke-bearing. This is my chance.

I had been fearful lest some way my death  
 Might breathe a calumny upon my life,  
 Repudiating all its earnestness,  
 Making it void. Were slow disease to come  
 And bring its weakness, I might be induced  
 To shameful conformation. But today  
 I dare, I dare; the time is opportune.

*1st M.* Think of the torture.  
*Ni.* I feel no wavering.  
 There is no power to intimidate  
 An upright man. His spirit is impelled  
 As irresistibly to stand its ground  
 As the coward's is to flee. There may be terror;  
 But still is honor stronger than all fear,  
 And holds the trembling limbs from ignominy.

*2nd M.* What use to make resistance? What result

Can follow such a course?

*Ni.* When the designs  
 That man pursues are rendered impotent  
 Of their external purpose, still remains  
 Necessity existing from within  
 That they be followed to the uttermost,  
 Whene'er 'twere shameful that they be abandoned.

The act begun, and not repented of  
 Has passed beyond the power of fickle will  
 To be the ward of honor.

*3rd M.* But how proper,  
 Now at the close of this illustrious reign,



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Quietly to withdraw and live at peace!

*Ni.* I would not have a taint of doubt to mar  
My unstained honor. Choose for yourselves,  
my brethren,

As you rate your merit. I feel that I deserve  
Even this stupendous sacrifice. Long years  
I have rejoiced in life's pure dignity;  
And shall I now repudiate it all

By hurling from me all its blessed trophies,  
All acquisitions that have made it noble?  
All I have lived for is my manhood's honor;  
Now when I find I have not lived in vain,  
Shall I throw from me all life's dear results,  
And leave the eager angel of my nature  
Henceforth to flee without a habitation,  
Crazed through chaotic space?

*A Herald enters.*

*Her.* Nirus, I herald  
Even him that leads our arms to victory.

*Ni.* The mystery profound is yet unsolved  
Of his identity; and I am glad

That I may see him. I can not even hear  
What name he goes by.

*Her.* Mine is not the right  
To speak aught of him. It suffices me  
That he will give you such a fearful death  
As the ages have not dreamed. I will be present  
To encore your shrieks. Ah! but for his re-  
straint

How quickly we would rend you! As of yore  
A tyrant wished of Rome, so I of tyrants  
Wish that they had one neck, that despotism  
Heaped in one house, might blow up all to-  
gether.

And now my wish is granted; here is Nirus  
With every crown upon his single head;

And we can strike and end all government,  
Bidding the nations in a frenzy of freedom  
Tear the old globe to pieces. All mankind,  
Like a milliard fierce Malays will run amuck  
And desolate creation. [*Sings—joined by the  
advance guard, who now enter.*]

Come hasten, now, for a rollicking game  
To the waist of the world, all men;  
And string pontoons in the vernal flame  
Bridging rivers and oceans; and then,

Let us form a circle of linking hands  
That shall forty times girdle the earth,  
With all the people of all the lands  
Ashriek in immoderate mirth.

Then let us join in an Indian dance  
To shake off the horrors of life,  
And swing the hatchet and fling the lance,  
Spring the arrow and plunge the knife.

And every time when one falls dead  
Let us give a shout of glee,  
And heap the dust gayly over his head,  
And sing of the ceasing to be.

And every time when one is born,  
Let us quickly dash out his brain,  
And hurl into coldness and stiffness forlorn  
Life's passion, impatience and pain.

Let us stab the beating breast of the earth,  
Till his fiery blood runs out,  
And he reels into space to our infinite mirth,  
While the stars are aghast all about.

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Ni. See, friends! the night is come; the stars  
appear.

Here is the ocean-beach; and all night long  
The sea in striving to shake off the stars  
From its great bosom, only mingles them  
More closely with its waters.

*Phinon enters. The others, except Nirus and  
the Herald, withdraw.*

Phi. There were two angels in the universe,  
And one was Love, and one was Hate; and these  
Were greater than all others; and they strove;  
And one was vanquished, and was hurled away  
Into the outer chaos. He that won  
Sublimely wrought the infinite expanse,  
Inventing harmony, a spirit-essence,  
To vitalize the void, and crystallize  
Like snow-flakes into myriad various forms  
Of cosmic life. But while he triumphed thus,  
Think not the rival tamely bore his fate,  
Or toiled impolitic; but he diffused  
His spirit, discord, through infinity,  
And organized the void in hostile empire  
To ruin all creation. I, like him,  
A fallen angel, with my attributes  
Remaining to me, all but love alone,  
Have made for me a kingdom in the midst  
Of this exalted sovereignty of yours,  
And ruined all. These long and peaceful years  
I have been slowly, surely building up  
A power to overwhelm you. I have blent  
All seething, hostile elements together  
In temporary concord; anarchists,  
And the partisans of exiled royalty,  
And frenzied priests of a degenerate sect,  
Leading in packs their savage proselytes  
Of a dusky race—all bound in monstrous league

For your destruction. Side by side arise  
The bellowing from hordes of cannibals,  
And hideous oaths and prayers more blasphem-  
ous

In tarry volumes that obscure the sky,  
Transforming heaven to hell. This mighty host  
I have created. Well you marvel, Nirus,  
As men have marvelled at your own great deeds.  
Did you not know me once? Did you not think  
That I was equal to you? I retain  
The Nirus in me to accomplish wonders,  
Even in my spiritual fall. Behold my work:  
Your empire is no more; your death is near;  
And we have sworn your ruin to complete  
By hunting all your writings from the earth,  
To the last line. 'Twill be a miracle  
If a few pitiful fragments should survive,  
Even though the poorest, to inform the world  
That once a certain Nirus had existence,  
Who cherished hopes of fame. Ah! I confess  
That part of me yet flinches in your presence;  
You triumph while you live; but now so soon  
You and your virtue will be blotted out,  
And I shall then be victor. I desired  
To see you living, groveling on the ground,  
The vital breath in your corrupted nostrils  
Serving no purpose but to keep you reeling  
Above the sod in sight of all men's loathing.  
Yet why? Is not the basest life on earth  
Better than dying? When you lie in death,  
You will be less than I, and I more noble  
Than Nirus then. Your death is near at hand;  
And such a death! More full of agony  
Than you have ever dreamed.

Ni. I bid it welcome.  
There is a martyr-passion in us all

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That leaps to meet the anguish. Let it hasten.  
 I feel an exultation in my soul  
 To temper all the terror. 'Tis a glory  
 That we can suffer thus. I feel a pride  
 To greet these Titan pains. Were we not great,  
 We could not yield such mighty answering  
 throes

To meet our doom.

*Phi.* But not mere torture only,  
 But shame incredible shall you endure,  
 To make you hideous in memory  
 With such a death's disgrace.

*Ni.* Ah, be it so!  
 That, too, will prove a triumph. If our lives  
 Were not exalted, we could never know  
 Indignity or shame. I welcome that  
 As part of martyrdom. As I am pure,  
 You have no power to render me ignoble,  
 Or make me loathe myself, or take away  
 The sacredness of my pure memory.  
 There is no shame but high-souled chivalry  
 Is equal to it. I will trust myself  
 Unflinching to my brothers' reverence,  
 And look up fearless to the glorious heavens  
 Through all that shame. 'Twill be another woe  
 For pity's reverence. I received my life  
 Devoutly from its sacred source; to-day  
 I give it stainless back. My brethren wait me.

*Phi.* You may rejoin them. [*Exit Nirus.*

I am vanquished still.

A nobleness within me leaps for joy  
 To see this grandeur. I had thought that now  
 The good in me was dead; and yet I find it  
 Vital as ever, captive, true, like Nirus,  
 Awaiting martyrdom, yet living still,  
 And fervent as of old.

*Her.* And that was Nirus,  
The mighty man of earth? Why, he is tall;  
Yet not so big as I am.

*Phi.* How indeed  
Should any man be famous, if his height  
Is not prodigious, and his strength of arm  
Not more than common? Did he not make me  
quail?

Was that like common men? Did you before  
E'er see me flinch? If you felt not his might,  
'Tis only that so dull a clod you are,  
Without a spirit's vulnerabilities.  
Spoke he like other men? Did you not hear?  
Or was his mien like others? Did you mark  
How came the martyr-triumph to his face,  
The radiance and anguish and despair,  
The courage and the terror? No; of course  
You could not see them. Oh! you need not fear  
Lest Phinon shrink. Fear not lest I abandon  
The purpose of my life. Even twice already  
Have I aimed the fatal blow. Twice did his  
minions

My vengeance intercept, and with their blood  
Secure him respite till this fatal day  
That rounds the period of the weird creation  
And brings on chaos again.

*VIII. The Seashore. Nirus.*

*Ni.* Once more beside the sea, the scolding sea  
That chides its restless wavelets. Here I wait  
In new-attained tranquillity, not sharing  
The agitation of my foes, who fret,  
Arranging for my death. At last, at last,  
My head is burdenless; my brow is free  
To the caressing breezes; and the beams  
Of the sweet sun are lured back once again  
To wreath my temples. Ah! how many years

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Those beams have shunned me, constantly re-  
pelled

By the coarse glare of worldly diadems!  
But now my brow is free, and once again  
The light can come and weave among my locks  
Its aureole of dreamery. Behold  
That little rise that slopes up to the sky,  
Showing a path to heaven! How mystical  
These faint, ethereal perfumes, as they steal  
At intervals upon me like the breath  
Of a rich Aeolian harp! The spring-times comes,  
The joyous spring-time; we can look again  
On pretty feet of children, and can hear  
The tender nuptial murmurs of the earth  
In a blessed tryst with heaven. Ah! radiant day!  
A day that has a halo like a saint!  
How glorious it ends! The imperial Sun,  
With but the splendor of his passing by  
Has kindled all the sky, and rippling flames  
Sweep o'er the west as o'er a summer prairie.

*1st Minister enters.*

*1st M.* Nirus, the time is near.

*Ni.* And we are ready,  
Are we not, brother?

*1st M.* Think you we shall die,  
And live no more? O Nirus, could such fate  
Follow a life like yours?

*Ni.* I know not, friend.

*1st M.* But think of all your deeds.

*Ni.* All over now,  
Such as they were, which, being such, bespeak  
Only a man, a living man, no more,  
Nor, thanks to nature, less; in common moods  
Merely a gossip, in great situations  
Rising straightway a hero.

*1st M.* You have sat

On the sovereign throne of earth.

*Ni.* And now at length

I lay me down in cheerful weariness,

So tired I do not care to think of waking.

*1st M.* That glorious face transcending light  
of suns,

Will that face fade forever?

*Ni.* I rejoice

If but a moment I have been entrusted

With some of heaven's rays; and I will keep

The sacred trust, guarding myself devoutly.

Not to disgrace the spirit.

*1st M.* These high thoughts,

And this life-long devotion, can all this

Be unrewarded?

*Ni.* Yea! At least I hope

That Nature doth not give her sanction thus

To our coarse bargaining. Let her demand,

And let us give a sacrifice, nor chaffer

In terms of usury.

*1st M.* Then you are certain

That you will live no more beyond today?

Cruel is your despair, involving thus

Us feebler souls.

*Ni.* Shall we not be in error

If we hope too much, and so becloud our vision

With mists of fancy, like luxurious fogs

Of Oriental incense? Be we brave

And patient to the end, and honestly

Wait for the truth, pleased with uncertainty,

Glad of the rich, full mystery in death,

Exulting in a faith too ignorant

For even a hope. Ah! now, at last, my friend,

After a blank of many barren years

I stammer a death-hymn. Here approach our  
friends



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To sing my song.

*Enter Singers.*

*Hymn.*

Why this doubting, dropping prone?  
Certain is our destiny;  
To be true and tender only;  
All the rest is phantasy.

We are spirits just as truly,  
Though we perish in a day;  
Guard the entrusted soulship duly;  
Holy let it pass away.

Let death have dominion never,  
Until life shall be no more;  
Let us keep the halo ever  
Round our life, till life is o'er.

What of doubt and dying? Surely  
Past and future both are naught;  
Let us keep the moment purely,  
Watching till relief is brought.

See our ruined lives' prostration,  
Dying anguish and despair;  
See the near annihilation;  
What of that? We need not care.

Let the chaos devastate us,  
Overwhelm us when it will;  
Demons cannot violate us,  
While our hearts are fervent still.

Let them flame in phantom riot,  
Till, acclimatized below,  
We shriek not, and hell is quiet  
With the fullness of our woe.

What of that? Why need we fear it?  
If they leave us sacred still,  
They may have us, body, spirit,  
Do with us whate'er they will.

But one dread for our endeavor,  
Lest we cease to be devout;  
Keep us free from that forever,  
Welcome ruin, welcome rout.

*Other Ministers enter.*

*2nd M.* Nirus, the time  
Is close at hand.

*3rd M.* An hour sooner, Nirus,  
Than we had heard.

*Ni.* O good Cotaminus,  
I envy thee, the only one deemed worthy  
Of a peaceful end.

*1st M.* I see our death-men coming.

*Ni.* Now calm, my brothers, calmer than hith-  
erto,

Worthy of this great moment. Lo! the sweet  
breezes,

On missions that we cannot understand,  
As hastening by they go, how serious,  
And yet not stern! They go by hand in hand,  
And seem to love; and they are bright with  
sunbeams,

Like a saint's halo. They caress our faces,  
Passing their soft hands lightly through our  
hair,

Setting it gladly free. Earnest are they,  
And yet not stern or troubled; light of heart,  
And yet not frivolous. They speak to us  
Of joy and care-free living; and they go  
On missions that we almost understand.  
O bright-eyed, tripping fairies, full of cheer,

